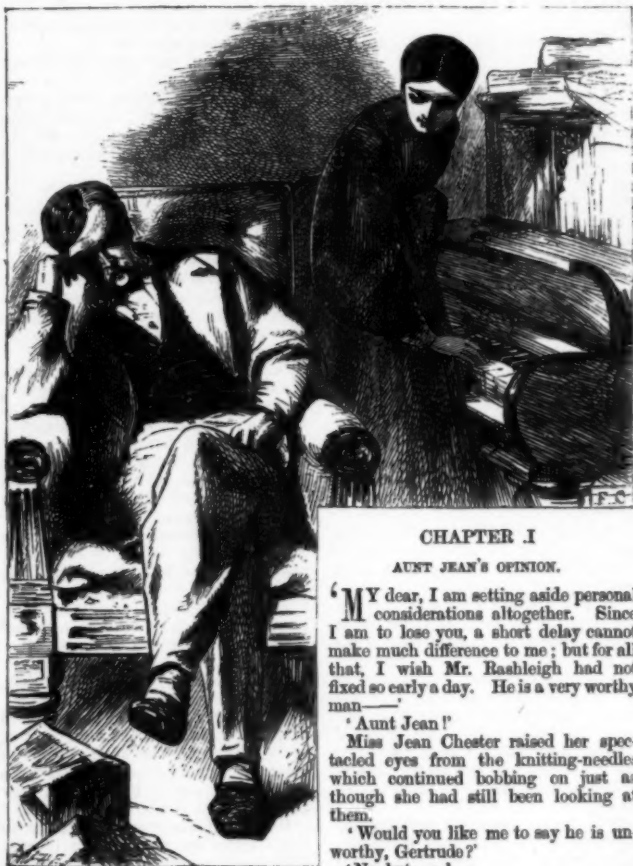


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THE STORY OF NOEL RASHLEIGH'S WEDDING.



## CHAPTER I

### AUNT JEAN'S OPINION.

'MY dear, I am setting aside personal considerations altogether. Since I am to lose you, a short delay cannot make much difference to me; but for all that, I wish Mr. Rashleigh had not fixed so early a day. He is a very worthy man—'

'Aunt Jean!'

Miss Jean Chester raised her spectacled eyes from the knitting-needles which continued bobbing on just as though she had still been looking at them.

'Would you like me to say he is unworthy, Gertrude?'

'No, but—'

'Very well. Of course it's not a romantic way of speaking, but when people come to Mr. Rashleigh's age—'

'Aunt Jean, Mr. Rashleigh is only seven-and-thirty.'

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'And you are twenty-one. I am perfectly well aware of the disparity, my dear; you need not enforce it. But if you interrupt me so often, I shall never get on with what I had to say. Mr. Rashleigh is a very worthy man, but he is a confirmed bachelor as to his habits. I can see that with half an eye. He is not fit to have the care of such an unformed madcap as you are. You are as wild as a young kitten, and as heedless. He will be letting you go your own way while he goes his; a bad arrangement always, but for such as you—ruinous. I wish he would wait a bit.'

'Why, you have just said he is too old already.'

'That is your perverse way of putting it. I say you are too young for him, which is different. He ought to know you better, and you ought to put yourself into training. Take my word for it, Gerty, your life isn't going to be all roses in that out-of-the-way country village.'

That out-of-the-way country village! A smile stole over the niece's face as she watched the knitting-needles which seemed to say the words over and over again in Miss Chester's rapid fingers. Why, the most attractive feature in all that unknown expanse that stretched out before her—Noel, of course, excepted—was this delightful country village of which her aunt spoke so slightly.

'It isn't out of the way, Aunt Jean, for a country village; it isn't many miles from the county town. And just imagine the fun of going amongst those queer farming people, seeing their ways, actually living amongst them, and making hay!'

'Haymaking will be over,' said Miss Chester, grimly.

'Well, but it will come again next year.'

'And if you think you are going to find anything to make fun of in those "queer farmers," as you call them, I can tell you it is a mistaken notion. Farmers in these days don't wear drab highlows and smockfrocks; neither do they say "Dang my buttons," and "Measter," except in books. We have accepted the old book type of farmer till he has become a sort of institution; nevertheless, in real life he is pretty nearly extinct.'

'You cannot suppose I meant to do anything of the sort,' said Gertrude, hotly. 'Why, Noel himself is only a retired farmer.'

Miss Chester laughed.

'On the strength of having spoiled

his land and impoverished himself with a sublimate, or a phosphate, or some other uncomfortable cranky chemical of which I know nothing. Fortunate for him that he was an only son, and fortunate for his farm that he had sense enough to let it.'

'George says Noel is the cleverest man he ever met.'

'Clever, is he? Well, for my part I can't see what people want to play at being tradesmen for. If he must be always at those chemical tricks, why didn't he serve his apprenticeship and get a shop, and then he might have stood a chance of knowing something, instead of doing mischief.'

'Aunt Jean, you don't understand. Noel is an amateur.'

'Well, if that means a lover, I suppose he is, at present,' responded Miss Chester, drily. 'But take care he doesn't tire of his new plaything and go back to the sublimate.'

Miss Chester having said this, put down her knitting, took off her spectacles, went up to her niece with great deliberation, and kissed her.

But Gertrude was unresponsive. The sharp sentence seemed to her as unjust as it was unkind; it had hurt her so much that she was afraid of turning her face to those eyes which had in reality little need of spectacles.

'Gertrude,' said Miss Chester, 'that speech was about as unkind and cruel as one as I could have made to a poor little girl under your circumstances. Don't resent it, however. I am out of sorts. I was a lonely old maid before your brother brought you to me; do you think I shall be less lonely now when you are gone?'

Gertrude responded, with an impulsive clinging to the hand which rested now so gently on her head, 'Aunt Jean, come and live with us.'

Again Miss Chester was tempted to be caustic. It is so hard for a shrewd observant keenness to refrain from uttering the satire that springs so readily to the lips. She shook her head gravely, however.

'My dear, if you wish it now, you would soon blame me if I were to yield to such a thing. You two are going to enter the lists for happiness, and must have no spy to see how you begin your battle with the world.'

Gertrude Chester made no answer to this. There was in her own mind a little shadowy consciousness that she had not wished her random request to be granted, and therefore there was a tiny atom of insincerity about it.



'At least, you will come and see us?'

'To be sure I will.'

'And you will find that in the country I shall do as the country does.'

'What's that, Gertrude? Scamper over the fields after wild flowers and watercress? Well, I love the country too; who doesn't? Remember this, however. I come to see you, but not uninvited. I can't have my unimportant person made into a tiresome ogre who may pounce down upon you at all seasons, unexpected and unwelcome. Those surprises have strange elements of discord in them.'

The niece would have uttered a disclaimer, but Miss Chester put a finger on her lips and bade her go away to bed and sleep, for it was getting late, and there was work in store for to-morrow.

But as to whether Gertrude was in any great hurry to follow this advice, those on the eve of so great and solemn an event as she was, an event which is to change the whole character of life, may judge.

There was so much to think of, so much to resolve upon. There were so many loyal vows of self-devotion to Noel's happiness to be registered. Aunt Jean may be right as to his having chosen a childish wife; unlearned, and poor, and childish; she was all these; but yet, as she decided, with a little flush of enthusiasm, not quite ignorant, not altogether a plaything, or useless. She could do a great deal, she thought, in that primitive village wherein her brother was curate. Not that she looked forward to his help, much. She had grand ideas of her own as to the wonderful things to be accomplished. There would be a Sunday school to teach at, or she might get up a school of her own; and then there were the poor people to be visited. To be sure Noel did not seem to know or be interested much about them, but he was so much occupied. And she could soon find out for herself all she wanted to know. And then she must make friends with those farmers about whom Aunt Jean had been so cross. And farmers were usually, she thought—though, of course, rustic and delightful—rather a stupid set of people; behind the age, probably; taking no interest in schools and charities, and a hundred other matters into which she meant to put her inexperienced little fingers.

And at this juncture a carriage rolled by in which she, leaning out of the open window, saw a cloud of muslin and lace; and had a vision of bouquets,

opera cloaks, and wreaths. And she remembered with a feeling of superiority that at one time she used to look with longing envy on such sights as that. How different it was now! How much nobler an ambition had replaced that dream of foolish vanity! How useful and good and quiet her life was going to be in the peaceful country, remote from this noise and riot of dissipation which had no longer any charm for her! All round the rosy horizon there was nothing but unflecked brightness; no cloud, no sign of so much as a shower; nothing but peace.

## CHAPTER II.

### MR. NOEL RASHLEIGH.

Meanwhile Mr. Noel Rashleigh was cutting across the country at a speed of some thirty miles an hour back to his home in the out-of-the-way village. His thoughts should, as a matter of course, have been pleasant; and if the question had been put to him as he first took his seat in the railway carriage, he would have answered unhesitatingly that they were pleasant. In Gertrude's society, or just fresh from it, he would have confessed with a comical helplessness that she had bewitched him; and even the occasional dry humour exhibited by the aunt failed in its confusing effect when Gertrude was by.

If, however, he had also been asked how so unlikely a circumstance as his engagement to Gertrude had ever taken place, his answer might not have come so readily. In effect, it often puzzled himself. It seemed to him a sort of unlooked-for event, chargeable upon locality and accident, since he felt sure that in his own residence, or amongst the surroundings that were connected in his mind with far different pursuits from that of love-making, such a thing would never have entered his head. He was, as might be inferred from Aunt Jean's strictures, devoted to chemistry—an alluring pursuit, doubtless, especially if there be grafted upon it the least suspicion of alchemical utopianism, and a floating dream or two concerning the philosopher's stone. Mr. Rashleigh might not have acknowledged that any such dreams troubled him, or that he did at enthusiastic moments discern somewhere, in the vast region of possibilities, the inviting glimmer of an *aurum philosophicum*. He might never have left the Elysian fields of philosophical bachelordom, but for a chance by which he and the curate—a new

arrival in the parish—became intimate; and this chance was the discovery that the curate had in his possession certain rare folios, possibly handed down to him from a bibliomane ancestor. These books he, the Rev. George Chester, was ready enough to lend, confessing, however, that they were unintelligible to himself. The admission fell upon dull ears. The prizes treated upon the transmutation of metals; and Noel talked to the curate as though the latter had been as widely acquainted with analytical and experimental chemistry as he fancied he was himself. Out of these books, then, and a vivid admiration which the somewhat slow intellect of Mr. Chester conceived for the philosophical genius, a friendship sprang up, which resulted in a proposal from the curate that Noel should accompany him on a visit he was about to pay to his aunt and sister in London.

Mr. Rashleigh at first declined; then suddenly some thought of the British Museum crossed his mind, and he withdrew his refusal. George Chester neither knew nor cared for the motive which led to this vacillation of purpose. He was proud of his friend, and glad of an opportunity to introduce him to Gertrude and his aunt. George himself was not brilliant, and for this reason, perhaps, he liked to seek and to be sought by those whom he considered above the average. It soothed his consciousness of personal mediocrity and gratified him.

The result of the visit has been seen. Mr. Rashleigh went but little to the British Museum. The thing was very wonderful, but not less true for that. He was taken captive by this child-like sister of the curate, whose very childishness came to him like fresh flowers to an invalid, or sunlight to a man long blinded. It dazzled him. She sang like the happiest bulb that ever charmed a moonlight listener; she was full of wilful tricks, which she did with all the grace of mock propriety. How the end came about, Noel could not tell. He only knew that he found her one morning cooing over some flowers that George had given her, and positively passing her lips backwards and forwards over them as she arranged them on the breakfast-table.

'They are so sweet,' said Gertrude, apologetically, 'and I have so few flowers. I dare say you in the country have so many that they are scarcely precious at all.'

Noel was not thinking of the flowers, or the childish action of fondling them.

It is to be supposed that the quick, universal impulse had overcome this strong-minded philosopher; for what followed was to him a very vague remembrance. When he came to himself he knew that he had laid all the beauties he could claim or procure of country life at her feet, if she would only accept them. *How* he had done it was another thing; awkwardly, of course, but that mattered little; it was done. And then the marvellous novelty of his sensations at finding that Gertrude was actually happy in his confession! It was true that her happiness seemed to be mixed with an awful reverence for him; still that it was happiness he could not doubt; and for the time he flung chemistry to the winds, and was happy too. He was not, however, learned enough in woman's nature to understand the sudden gravity that came over Gertrude, and seemed to sober her all at once from the madcap Miss Chester, and called her into the thoughtful woman.

'Aunt Jean will tell you dreadful tales about me,' said Gertrude, not without a hesitating fear for the result. 'And indeed I am afraid I have deserved all that she will say. But I am not going to be wilful any more; everything is so—'

'So what?'

'So very different now. I—you know, Mr. Rashleigh, I had nothing to give up being wilful for.'

She said it as if entreating him to be lenient in his judgment of those dreadful things which Aunt Jean would say; and Noel laughed, for Miss Chester and her opinions were of very secondary importance to him just then. He got over his interview with that formidable lady as soon as possible, and emerged from it with an oppressive idea of spectacles that had seemed to be looking through to his backbone, and knitting-needles which had bobbed out sharp speeches at him till he was almost bewildered. Aunt Jean had nevertheless been on the whole tolerably propitious, and Noel was satisfied. It was all very strange and wonderful; wonderful to think that Gertrude cared for him, and that he, Noel Rashleigh, had made so decided a plunge into the unknown sea which, for anything he knew, might be full of ruinous rocks and breakers. He looked at himself in the glass and thought how ugly he was. He rubbed his hands over his forehead, and wished for a moment that he could rub out that deep wrinkle from between the eyebrows, but he couldn't; and then he laughed

at himself, and went to take his leave of Gertrude for that time, and to stipulate that he should be allowed to come again soon, and that the wedding should not be long delayed.

This stipulation had to be made to Aunt Jean; and, in obedience to some masonic signal which Noel did not understand, Gertrude left the room as he made it, and he was again alone with Miss Chester. The wedding! As he spoke of it he actually felt the red in his dark cheek, and turned stammering from the keen eyes watching him.

Aunt Jean, however, had something to say which she conceived it her duty to say; and under such circumstances it was not her habit to relent.

'Mr. Rashleigh,' said the old lady, 'you are going to take away a spoiled child who is very dear to me. You will not be offended if I speak to you plainly?'

'Offended? No, certainly not.'

'When a man gives himself up to one pursuit, to which he gives up the whole of his time and energy, it is apt to become a second nature grafted upon the first; so that he is unlikely to consider those trifles which make the sum of human things, and go to the fulfilment of domestic happiness. Mr. Rashleigh, Gertrude is very young; in reality, though not in years, she is a mere child. I beseech you to take thought for her.'

'Madam,' replied Noel, looking at her with hazy, uncomprehending eyes, 'her happiness shall be my dearest care.'

And Miss Chester, reading perfectly the expression of his face, knew that it would be hopeless to say any more.

We left Mr. Rashleigh, however, in the railway carriage on his return home after that memorable last visit before the wedding, the day for which had been fixed. As the distance increased between himself and Gertrude the echoes of her voice ceased to haunt him; and by the time he reached his own house his meditations concerning some little alterations he had proposed to himself therein were oddly mixed with a wonder whether a certain pamphlet ordered before he left home had arrived in his absence.

He went to the study or laboratory, the construction of which had excited the village wonder some few years ago, when he finally gave up the farm on which his father had grown wealthy. A packet that met his eye was inimical to the alterations; they could be made at any time; and he was eager to dip

into this new treatise on an old subject.

The voice of his future brother-in-law roused him from a long fit of absorption, and he started up only half awakened from his reverie—one of those reveries concerning which Gertrude already knew something—very little yet, and which she afterwards took to call 'sublimates,' with that rueful sort of jesting which smothers a sigh.

'Oh, I was coming to you, George,' said Mr. Rashleigh, bringing himself back with a jerk. 'It's to be next week—Wednesday—you can come, I suppose?'

'Yes; I shall run up the day before. How did you leave them?'

'Very well.'

'And from London you go—where?'

'Go!' repeated Mr. Rashleigh, puzzled; 'oh, I see. Yes. Upon my word I am not sure that we fixed decidedly. To the north, I think it will be.'

'The lakes? Very nice to be you,' said the curate, with a half sigh. 'I must go. I only looked in upon you in passing.'

And Mr. Rashleigh, left alone, fingered the leaves of that treatise a little longer, and then closed it, and went to walk up and down on his lawn, that he might think.

Yes, it would be very nice; George was right about that. Very nice to have a bright little fairy singing about the lonely house, and making it merry with her own lightheartedness. Very nice when he left his study to find her waiting for him, ready to talk or to be silent; to sit as she had sat for a little while the evening before, with her head resting on his shoulder and her hand in his; or to walk with him about those fields on which he had tried his unsuccessful experiments, and which were now let to his neighbour, Mr. Frankton.

Noel Rashleigh spent the next half-hour as a lover should have spent it, and then with a sudden practical thought he turned back into the house, and wrote to the county town for the very best piano which could be furnished at a short notice from a provincial warehouse.

### CHAPTER III.

#### WHAT THE PARISH SAID.

'I'll never believe it. As for the first report of the marriage, Mr. Rashleigh is much too sensible a man to do such a thing; and for the second—'

The speaker stopped. It was as though the very enormity of that second report took her breath away. She, Mrs. Rodington Haye, was calling upon her neighbour, Mrs. Frankton, and the two ladies, having strolled into the garden, were supposed to be admiring the flowers.

'As for the second instalment of the report,' proceeded Mrs. Haye, deliberately, 'it is simply laughable.'

'Like most reports, to be accepted, if accepted at all, with a reservation,' responded her companion.

Mrs. Rodington Haye glanced from the scarlet geranium, whose faded blossoms her friend was cutting off, towards the spot where the chimneys of Mr. Rashleigh's house seemed to blend with the church-tower.

'Then the marriage also must be nonsense. A girl of eighteen! Why, it is absolutely ridiculous.'

'That I had from Mr. Chester himself,' replied Mrs. Frankton, 'so of course, it is true. And I don't see exactly why it is ridiculous. I am not sure about her age being eighteen; I only know that she is very young.'

'You had it from Mr. Chester?'

'Yes. The wedding takes place this week, I believe.'

Mrs. Haye—she was very particular about that final *o*: it distinguished her from the commoner Hayes to be found in the provincial town—indulged in a speculative grimace. Of course Mr. Rashleigh had a right to be married if he liked, and without consulting his neighbours; nevertheless there was some slight feeling of aggrievement astir amongst them. They had a sort of vested interest in him as a bachelor. More than once he had lent the lawn before his house as a croquet-ground; and although Mrs. Haye herself cared nothing about croquet, yet she did like the liberty and license with which on such occasions she went through Noel's rooms, examined his furniture, and, in common with others, made herself perfectly at home in them. It was very useful to have such a house in the parish; and of course, if a mistress came to it, all that would be altered. But as to the second bit of gossip—whisper it gently—how it could possibly have arisen, who first made it up, or heard it, or dreamt it, no one could find out. If it were not for the exertions of Captains Speke and Grant, I might perhaps say, as well try to discover the source of the Nile; but that platitude has been robbed of its point.

The report was, then, that the new

Mrs. Rashleigh intended to take the lead in the parish.

'It has been traced to the Lisesles,' said Mrs. Haye, somewhat inconsequently as to the foregoing conversation, but apropos of the report; 'and Mrs. Lisle cannot tell exactly where she heard it first. Take the lead, indeed! Upon my word, it is too absurd for comment. Young ladies in these days do certainly not know their place. I suppose she is going to reform us all. Take the lead!'

Mrs. Haye, being the widow of a professional man, and possessing an independent fortune, arrogated to herself a certain importance in the parish, which was conceded, partly perhaps to a self-assertive power, and partly to a very uncertain temper.

'The marriage itself is, no doubt, an intrigue between the curate and his sister,' she proceeded. 'Everybody knows how poorly the clergy provide for their children—and just think of the seams of Mr. Chester's coats! Of course this is altogether admirable for them both.'

'I think you go a little too far,' ventured Mrs. Frankton.

Her visitor stooped, and laid one yellow kid finger on the faded geranium.

'The thing is—are we to notice her?'

Mrs. Haye's tone was solemn and impressive, and the speech altogether had a magnificent sound. Underneath it there was an uneasy, resentful doubt lest, in the innumerable divisions which do so singularly intersect the classes with lives difficult to comprehend, the new Mrs. Rashleigh should think herself above her neighbours in the social scale.

Something of this must have cropped out; for Mrs. Frankton, looking upon the yellow kid finger, broke into a laugh of genuine amusement.

'At any rate,' she said, 'as we have hitherto been very good friends with Mr. Rashleigh, I suppose we shall be neighbourly enough to call.'

Some unhappy thread had surely got entangled in the fabric of poor Gertrude's fate, and had been enwoven with it. Prejudice had crept on before her, and was already doing her incalculable mischief. If these gossipers would only have stopped to consider the actual foundation for their decisions! But that is a thing seldom done.

'Oh! I dare say she will be trying to visit at Sir James Field's, and possibly with Lord Cavendish himself. We cannot keep up with that sort of thing, you know.'

Again Mrs. Frankton laughed. 'Upon my word,' she said, 'I am quite tired of Mrs. Noel Rashleigh before I have seen her. She has had more than could be compressed into nine ordinary days already. How do you think my rose-hedge looks?'

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### HER IMPRESSION.

It was a somewhat dreary morning in November, that month which is so unfairly maligned as suicidal, and which is so often one of the mildest and most agreeable months in the latter half of the year.

Gertrude Rashleigh left her seat at the breakfast-table with some haste, and knelt down at a low window which she threw open, leaning over the stone sill outside. The proximate cause for this change of posture must have been the approaching footsteps of a servant or the departing ones of Mr. Rashleigh, or perhaps both, since the expression of Mrs. Rashleigh's face was not one which would have borne the scrutiny of servants' eyes.

She listened to the noisy removal of the breakfast service, and once or twice had an impulsive desire to beg for less violent demonstrations on the remover's part; but she restrained herself. It is a humiliating fact for a mistress to confess, but Mrs. Rashleigh was afraid of her servants. This morning she was afraid of everything. She was so lonely, and wretched, and low-spirited, that it was hard to keep back the tears, and gulp down the lump in her throat, a giving way to which would, she reflected, be so very childish. She scolded herself, instead of thus giving way. What did she want? Had she not all, and more than all, that could possibly be desired? Was not her husband kindness itself; and had she ever heard a harsh word from his lips? Never! Perhaps it was early days for that yet; and perhaps also, in the midst of her self-scolding, the shutting of the distant door of his laboratory fell upon her ear with a blank, chilly reminder of the desolate and aimless day before her. A day like yesterday, and the day before, and, oh! so many days before, that she could hardly remember when they began, and certainly could not look forward to the time when they would end.

And then her thoughts wandered back to the first few days of her life in this new home. How happy they were! How constantly Noel had been with

her! What pleasant walks they had taken together about the fields, and down under the willows by the river-side. And he had started a project of a boat, in which he was to row her to the ruins of an old abbey a few miles lower down the river; and George was to go with them and make a pic-nic of it. And the cooing of wood-pigeons was in her ear again; the rippling of the clear beautiful water, as the willow branches kissed it; and she saw again the great pink beds of wild geranium, and the wild yellow iris, the foxgloves, forget-me-nots, and countless wild flowers growing in the coverts by the river. In the fields, too, the startled pheasants ran from the path, scarcely fearing her sufficiently to fly outright. And then the rabbits and hares, and the thousands of birds with their marvellous songs—all new to her! But, above all, Noel had been there.

And the wife of a few months roused herself, for a great hot tear had fallen on her hand, and more threatened to come—a shower more like July than November; hot and thundery.

'I won't do it,' said Mrs. Rashleigh, passionately. 'I will not—it's wicked.'

And so tear after tear fell, and was wiped away with angry vehemence, and still they persisted in coming.

'Aunt Jean, Aunt Jean, what would you say to me now? Oh, I wish I had some one to scold me for being so wicked and ungrateful!'

But Aunt Jean would never come uninvited, and how was it possible to invite her, when she would see and know all? All what?

It would have been difficult for Gertrude to answer that. And it seemed useless to try to rouse herself from these musings, since there was nothing at all, that she knew of, for her to do.

She had got tired of those long, rambling walks which had been rather pleasant when first Noel began to turn towards that ugly door and leave her to herself; besides it was not the season for them.

What could she do? Something must be wrong in herself; what was it?

Mrs. Rashleigh drew a stool to the window and took a piece of work from her work-table. She was going to be good and useful. But, alas! she could have found few better misery accelerators than the needle. There were so many associations connected with it; so many of Aunt Jean's dry remarks as to her niece's long stitches and short progress. The needle was very bright at first, but it grew dim; she could not see

it at all: then it split into a dozen needles. And she threw down the work and set herself to think.

We may as well go back with her along her brief experience of married life, since we know as yet nothing about it.

It seemed to have been a series of false or unfortunate steps, from which those neighbours whom she was so anxious to conciliate drew, without of course meaning to be cruel, cruel conclusions.

She remembered her first Sunday at church, where everything was so different from what she had been accustomed to, that, but for the novelty, it would have made her miserable at once.

The better part of the congregation came in as they would have entered a concert-room, or any other place of public entertainment; speaking over the seats to their friends, some even shaking hands, and then taking a deliberate survey of all those who had been previously seated, before they settled themselves for the performance (*sic*). The word must be excused; it was one which occurred with an almost hysterical affection of remorse to the bride herself, who sat in a shady corner of her ugly square pew, shrinking from all those eyes which were turned so mercilessly upon her.

Then came those lower in the social scale, and they strolled in by twos and threes, and took their places stolidly with open mouths and staring eyes, as though they had no very exact idea of what was about to take place, but whatever it might be, they were not to be shaken from their heavy blankness of indifference.

Moreover, so that the arrivals were over before the sermon began, it did not seem to matter much about the other parts of the service; and the constant disturbance of those clanking iron-heeled country boots—in rustic parlance donkey-shod—and the heavy, swaying gait which seemed to bring each foot down with the whole weight of the body above it, all had a perfectly novel and bewildering effect upon Mrs. Rashleigh.

Also, it was her unhappy fate to be musical; and the dreadfully ornate chants and long dreary hymns, all in that inimitable nasal twang of Sunday-school children, which must be heard to be appreciated, tried her sorely.

During the sermon some one snored very audibly behind her, and taking

courage to glance round, a vision of open mouths and closed eyes caused her to turn again quickly and keep close in her corner. The wonder was that Noel sat so gravely composed and tranquil at her side; but then he was used to it.

Her comments on the subject afterwards struck him as so novel and amusing that he encouraged them; and here again fortune was surely inimical to Mrs. Rashleigh. For after her appearance at church, the little village world began to call upon her. It was very awful; worse a great deal than she had expected.

The visitors, already prejudiced, were so stiff and angular and utterly unapproachable, that Gertrude began to think society in the country must be a very starchy affair indeed, and to reflect with dismay upon her former ideas of the cordial way in which she was to receive her neighbours' advances. There did not seem to be any advances to receive. Mrs. Rashleigh, young, inexperienced, and fearful of not pleasing, got nervous in the awful pauses, and rushed madly into a subject which she thought must surely be common ground. The necessity of improvement in the church music, and the dreary way in which the service was conducted.

Unhappy blindness that possessed her! Why could she not see the village crest erecting itself; growing red and defiant; rising higher and higher against her? So, that was the way in which the lady intended to commence her leadership! She was going to reform the church services, and the vicar of course; and perhaps she would tune the organ and 'lead' the singing. Really, the parish had not seen before how very faulty it was; there was hope for it, however, now that it possessed a Mrs. Noel Rashleigh! It would soon improve. A child like that to come and preach, indeed! As if it was not bad enough that she had angled for and caught the best match in the parish; and now she, an interloper, a conceited schoolgirl, must set up her opinion about the services, which were not good enough for her!

And she had actually laughed at the organist, and called him a 'country practitioner'!

Of course it was easy to make use of low wit. Anything could be turned into ridicule—except, of course, Mrs. Rashleigh. Also she had given it as her impression that many of the poorer







people seemed to go to church more for the actual change and variety than from any love for the service itself.

'Her impression!'

There is absolutely no word to express the intense contempt with which 'her impression' was flung at the unfortunate young lady, from all parts of the parish, till it became a household word, and small ladies and gentlemen used it in their nursery quarrels to extinguish a belligerent nurse.

Mrs. Rashleigh of course did not know what she had done; she only knew that she was woefully disappointed in these neighbours, from whose companionship she had hoped so much. Their bearing and conversation when she did happen to meet them gave her some vague uneasy idea of fencing, and roused more than once the angry colour to her face, and something like defiance to her eye. They were either very disagreeable people, or else something was wrong in herself. At any rate, their calls must be returned, and perhaps they would be different by-and-by.

But by this time Noel Rashleigh's holiday-making was over, and he had begun to busy himself again with his old occupations, and leave his wife to herself. She could not go alone to visit these people, even if it were proper she should do so. In the boldness of this propriety she had once taken her husband by storm, and inveigled him into accompanying her upon one of these visits of ceremony. If she could have heard the sigh with which he shut himself up in his study on his return, she might have known how hopeless it would be to try again. She did not know it, however; nevertheless it was not without a little misgiving that she ventured to knock at that door which some instinct warned her was intended to shut her husband from the outer world, and to be respected accordingly. Her knock produced no result, and she turned the handle and said gently, 'Noel.'

Not to this either did she get any answer. The door yielded to her hand, and she went in. She had a confused perception of some pungent odour in the room; of incomprehensible vessels and instruments lying about; of wonderful dusty volumes, on one of which she put her hand absently; and of her husband, absorbed and inaccessible, never even turning to look at her.

She would not go back. It was a mistake to be there, perhaps, but being there she told her errand bravely, see-

ing at the same time, with eyes that read the words mechanically, the title of the volume under her hand, 'Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum.'

A feeling of some grim significance in the words came over her. What business had her small requirements to obtrude themselves into an atmosphere such as this? What chance had she of winning Noel's ear?

When he did look up at her he was, as usual at such times, like a man half awake, and he was muttering, with his finger on a page to keep his place, something about the fairy of Paracelsus, and the hypothesis of Dr. Girtanner, of Göttingen.

Gertrude spoke again, hesitatingly this time, and with that strange new feeling of incongruity and hopelessness tingling her speech.

'What is it?' said Noel, dimly. 'Why, my dear girl, I never do go out; never did, you know. It is impossible.'

'But, Noel, these people have called upon us, and they will be offended.'

'What about?'

'If we do not return their calls.'

Mr. Rashleigh passed his hand through his hair confusedly, and his book, relieved of the finger, closed. He had lost his place, and was getting impatient.

'Can't you do it, Gertrude?'

'Alone!'

Noel was at his wife's end. He was very fond of his wife; but what were his neighbours to him? Had marriage brought upon him any necessity to study their convenience more than his own? Gertrude was the dearest little wife in the world, but that she should expect him to do such violence to his nature as this was very terrible.

'I'll tell you what, Gerty,' he said briskly. 'I'll get you a pony carriage, and then Joseph can drive you anywhere you want to go. That is, I'll reckon up and see if I can afford it.'

Gertrude put her hand on his shoulder timidly, and he took it in his own and kissed it; but the movement was not reassuring. It drove down deeper into her heart the conviction that he did not want her; it was a kiss of bribery, to send her away. This room and its contents were more to him than his wife; if she was to be an encumbrance why had he married her? With a womanly instinct of having at least one trial before confessing herself a secondary object to her husband, she turned steadily away from all these unknown rivals and saw only him. And in turning, the hand which had rested on that 'Thea-

trum Chemicum' struck it from her with an impetuous angry movement.

'Don't get a pony carriage, Noel. I don't want it; I should not like it. I want nothing—but you.'

'Well,' he said, smiling, 'you have got me, haven't you?'

Still Gertrude shut out everything in that room, against which a passionate sensation of jealousy was rising up, and saw only him. And she knew that she must yield.

'You will do without me this morning, Gertrude?'

'Yes, Noel.'

And then he drew her down and kissed her forehead.

'That's a good little wife. So now go and do these troublesome calls, and make haste back to tell me all about them.'

Gertrude went away heavily. And the walk was very hot, and the birds were very tiresome, for they would persist in singing almost as though it had still been summer, while in reality it was autumn; time for the trees to begin to wither, as her hopes were withering. She said so to herself, for there was a sort of relief in saying it.

'He told me to make haste back to tell him all about it. And by this time he has forgotten that he has a wife. It will be always the same, I suppose: always "sublimates." And I shall have to like this. If I could do anything for him I wouldn't care. I meant to try so hard to make him happy, and now he is happy without me. And then these dreadful people! Why should I trouble myself to conciliate them if Noel doesn't? I care only for him, and they are rude and disagreeable. I have a great mind to go back.'

But at this juncture, toying irresolutely with the gate that led to Mrs. Haye's residence, Gertrude caught sight of that lady in a strong-minded bonnet, huge gardening gloves, and carrying a garden fork. And Gertrude could not go back, for Mrs. Haye came forward to meet her, with a back so very straight and stiff that half a dozen pokers might have been fixed in it.

But Mrs. Rashleigh, out of sorts and dismal already, neither made nor received any more favourable impression than usual; and she was glad to get back, hot and tired, to her own room, and think about Noel.

Reaction had begun already, and she was blaming herself. She had been behaving like a spoiled child, not like a sensible wife. She must and would alter this. She would see about the housekeeping, and be useful somewhere.

So her next venture was an irruption into the kitchen, where a red-armed woman faced her defiantly, holding a spit in her hand, as though the little lady had been a joint of meat just ready for impaling. The red-armed woman had lived cook and housekeeper also with the master too long to be put upon by his new plaything of a wife. Let her keep to her pianer and her tattering and thingamies, and not bring airs into the kitchen, where everybody knew she was as ignorant as a babe unborn.

The cook did not say this aloud, of course; but as she stood like a bull making up his mind for a rush, shaking his head and snorting, Gertrude read it as plainly as though it had been spoken. And her heart sank, for she was ignorant. She was also totally incapable of dealing with this woman; and the thought crossed her mind that Noel, being aware of this incapacity, might have helped her. She dismissed the thought as disloyal. She must never blame Noel any more. Everything was her own fault. She should have taken Aunt Jean's advice, and put herself into training. Her idea of being useful in housekeeping details was, then, a failure; her own servants treated her with a deference that was galling from its assumption of superior wisdom, and she was nobody in her own house.

She had also made a feeble attempt in the direction of the schools, but the mistress thereof had shown herself so decidedly cantankerous that Gertrude did not dare to persevere. It was true that she might have applied to the vicar, but then she was shy; moreover, he might not see her anxiety for work in the right light. He was a very good man, but he was also very old and infirm, and if he had possessed enemies, which he did not—at least in his own parish—they might have accused him of a sort of sleepy, apathetic dullness in the monotonous round of duties which he went through now just as he had gone through them forty years ago. As for her brother, it was quite useless to appeal to him. He was still new in the parish, and was not liked. Although not gifted with a brilliant intellect, such talents as he had were devoted to his calling, and his fault in the beginning had been over plain speaking wherever he saw abuses. The curate whom he succeeded had been a hunter, shooter, fisher, cricketer, athlete; not, perhaps, one of Mr. Kingsley's muscular priests, since these are not supposed to neglect their duties, as he did. Nevertheless, inasmuch as he gave to the poor with

a free-handed generosity, which Mr. Chester, being poor himself, could not emulate, comparisons were drawn between the two considerably to the advantage of the former curate, and to the depreciation of the present one.

But all this has nothing to do with Mrs. Rashleigh's troubles; neither did her retrospect on this dreary November day, in which the sun positively declined to come out, help her, except to this conclusion. She had wronged Noel in her marriage with him. He had expected a wife able to discharge all the duties of a head of the house, and she was nothing but a child after all, who dared not speak to her own servants.

At night she sat down to the piano. And by-and-by the door of that distant study opened, and Noel came in and sat down just where she had been sitting over her work.

Gertrude played on—music that seemed to grow spontaneously under her fingers out of the hope that at least now she was doing something to please him.

And she played till her fingers ached, and the church clock struck, causing her to wonder at the lateness of the hour. Then she rose and went up to her husband. Noel was asleep.

## CHAPTER V.

### ANY MUSHROOMS?

The December sun shone out feebly, only, as it seemed, to show the frosty nakedness of the land.

But a bright idea had struck Mrs. Rashleigh, and she was walking briskly through the fields with a basket in her hand. She was looking for mushrooms. Of course she had not told anyone what the basket was for—indeed, who was there to tell?—or she might have been laughed at for her pains. She never stopped to consider times and seasons. It had suddenly occurred to her that mushrooms grew in the fields; so into the fields she went to look for them.

And she had walked a long way, and was tired when she stopped appalled before a gate which was padlocked.

What could she do now? She had taken this way, thinking it would be shorter, and to go all round those fields back again would be terrible. While she deliberated a voice startled her, and turning round she saw Mr. Frankton in the act of raising his hat to her.

'I am sorry it is locked, Mrs. Rashleigh. But it is a gate we very seldom

use, and the village boys had a bad habit of leaving it open. I will go home for the key if you don't mind waiting; or—'

Mr. Frankton looked at the slight figure of the lady speculatively. It is possible that he was thinking how easy a solution of the difficulty it would be to lift her, basket and all, over the gate, but of course he did not dare to suggest it. As for Gertrude, the possibility of climbing a gate was not likely to occur to her.

'Not on any account, thank you,' she said, to his offer of fetching the key. 'I can go round. I thought this way was nearer. I have been looking for mushrooms,' she added, glancing at her basket; 'but I have not found any.'

Mr. Frankton did not smile.

It was a very winning face that was turned towards him; nervously sensitive—somewhat childish. He began to think vaguely of all the stories of Mrs. Rashleigh's designing nature, her pride, arrogance, and conceit. He had paid but little attention to them himself, but they occurred to him now, incidentally with this childish acknowledgment of looking for mushrooms on a frosty day in December.

'Perhaps they don't grow on your land, Mr. Frankton?'

'Not at this time of the year,' replied Mr. Frankton, with perfect gravity and courtesy. 'It is not the season for them. I can show you a shorter way home than the one you came by, Mrs. Rashleigh. Will you allow me to carry your basket?'

And then she found herself walking towards home side by side with Mr. Frankton, and confessing to herself that he was far more agreeable and polite than the ladies of the parish had been, with the exception, perhaps, of his wife, who could not be uncourteous, though her distance was freezing.

'This is your way,' said Mr. Frankton, relinquishing the basket. 'Through the gate by that large holly-bush. It is scarcely more than a field's breadth from there.'

It was not to be expected that Mr. Frankton could resist telling the episode of the mushrooms; but when he found that it was snapped up and twisted into affection of pretty ignorance, superciliousness, conceit, he stopped, and said, laughing, 'When Mrs. Frankton first came home she called the guinea fowls jackdaws. Don't be hard upon Rashleigh's pretty little wife.'

The walk, however, which Gertrude had to take in consequence of her ex-

petition was of far more importance than Mr. Frankton had imagined it would be when he pointed out to her that shorter route.

The gate by the holly-bush! When she reached that bush she stopped in impulsive admiration for the brilliant berries with which it was covered; and as she stopped the thought which it suggested was so enormous, so beautiful, so full of capabilities and possible delight, that she forgot all about her fatigue, and started off with a fresh impetus towards home that she might think it out.

This casual suggestion had fired a long train of ideas—lighted up a hundred designs and devices, all bearing upon it or growing out of it, but before lying torpid amongst the records of things seen once but now forgotten.

Here was work for idle hands; beautiful work, too good for her. Too good almost in the first flush of anticipation to be possible. What if some one else, finding out the notion, should take it from her! As yet the very idea of it was hidden in her own mind, and so it should be kept. No one must hear of it. By a subtle process of analogy, she thought she comprehended now a speech her husband had once made to the curate in her hearing (about the necessity which impels men, having conceived the hope or prospect of a new invention, to keep it to themselves).

And then she knew so well how to do this work, the idea of which had occurred to her. Symbolical devices sprang up ready made before her eyes to dazzle them; beautiful wreaths and chaplets. Was there time for her, single-handed, to do all that she would wish to do? She counted up. It wanted nearly three weeks to Christmas. In that time surely she might do all; but she must have a room set apart to work in, and Joseph must be pressed into the service to get evergreens; and that dreadful housemaid must, if possible, be won over to keep the secret.

Before all, however, she must have the vicar's permission, and this was to be quietly obtained, so that not even Noel should know what was going on. It should be a surprise to him and to every one, even the vicar himself, who was not to know beforehand the extent of the proposed decorations.

That evening her head was too busy to listen for the opening door; too busy to care that Noel remained in his seclusion later than usual; too busy to be miserable. She had found work enough.

## CHAPTER VI.

### QUID NUNC?

What was it? Who said it? Could it possibly be true?

There was a ghastly whisper afloat that Mrs. Rashleigh had told the old clerk she would take out of his hands the Christmas decorations, which had hitherto consisted of a bush of holly and ivy with the berries flowered in the corner of each pew, and a besom in the east window.

And the parish held its breath, and there was a great calm, like the calm before a thunderstorm.

And the curate found his sister one day out on the lawn in a white frost, and caught her putting her hands behind her when she saw him, like a naughty child, looking, at the same time, so wickedly happy and silently busy that even to his slow apprehension the idea of danger presented itself.

'Now, Gerty,' said George, 'don't you do too much, just at first.'

'Too much!' repeated Mrs. Rashleigh, indignantly. 'George, how is that possible?'

Mr. Chester hesitated. He had an indistinct consciousness that his sister was not in favour; and he thought that perhaps he really was disposed to let that consideration bias him, and to be over cautious. He fancied uneasily that it would have been better not to keep the thing so secret, for all that, but he scarcely liked to say so.

'Well,' he said, 'I only know if I hadn't gone about things too hotly at first I might have done more. People have prejudices, you know, and even if things are right and fit in themselves—'

'Right should give way to prejudice. I wonder at you, George.'

George would perhaps have argued further, but his sister took his arm and led him into her workroom, where the housemaid, won over, was busy over some tiny wreaths.

'Look there,' said Gertrude. 'You ought to be flattered, for even Noel doesn't so much as know what I am about. This scroll is for over the altar, and the font is to be managed with real flowers and moss. How gloomy you look, George. Indeed I don't think you deserve to see these things.'

'People never like to be taken by storm,' responded George.

It was true that he looked gloomy. He did not know what to say. That Gertrude had the vicar's permission was a very strong point; but George was far from understanding how very little the



vicar knew what his permission meant; the latter having thought, in his simplicity, that the rather odd little lady, Mrs. Rashleigh, had a fancy for taking the clerk's work from him, and sticking the holly branches into the gimlet holes prepared for them.

'Nevertheless,' muttered the curate as he went away, 'I'm afraid, I am very much afraid there'll be a row.'

But the dreadful thundery calm continued, and on Christmas Eve the old vicar, seeing ladders in the churchyard, and having a dim vision of workmen in the porch, and a dainty figure passing in and out amongst them, wondered what was the matter, and thought he would go and see by-and-by.

As it happened, however, he had his sermon to finish, and by-and-by did not come until Christmas morning was beginning to dawn, and, as was his custom, he went across the churchyard to the vestry door, and thence into the church.

At the door the vicar halted in amazement. A long while he stood there, with his hand on the back of a pew, and then there stole a strange expression over his face, and he moved on, but very slowly and silently, towards the altar.

From under the dreamy torpor of many years something came struggling up into the old man's heart which touched him strangely; his drooping shoulders seemed to lose their droop, and his lips were moving softly. He was reading the golden 'Gloria in Excelsis Deo, et in terra Pax!'

And suddenly there was a mist before his eyes, and a star shone down over the distant birthplace earth once offered to her Lord, and the Light of the world was come.

And the church was, as it were, full of the waving of angels' wings, and of the music of the song which fell upon the shepherds' ears. And still the old man stood there motionless. There was something so inexpressibly solemn and tender in the thoughts this unexpected sight had roused within him; something so strangely beautiful and touching about these silent witnesses that bade earth's children bear in mind the light and life which broke upon their darkness as to-day, that when the vicar left the church his lips were muttering, half unconsciously, 'Put off thy shoes from thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.'

He went back into his study and took up the sermon prepared for the morning's service; dry with arguments from

dusty volumes; sleepy with the wisdom of many commentators; a soulless disquisition which seemed to crumble before the spirit that overshadowed the silent church in the fresh dawn of that Christmas morning.

Three hours were before him yet; and as he wrote, the solemn exaltation and tenderness were like a halo round his pen, and words flowed from it swiftly, as though they had come from something within himself which even he could scarcely comprehend.

A brief sermon, lasting in its delivery but a few minutes; but so new, so different from the dreary dissertations which usually came from the vicar, that Gertrude Rashleigh, listening from her corner, forgot for a moment the sudden blow that had fallen upon her, in the wonderful power of this eloquence coming straight from one man's heart to go, straight to the hearts of others.

How good of him; how very good, and strange too, it was to preach as though he had known all about the decorations beforehand!

For Gertrude was suffering from a disappointment whose keenness she scarcely realized yet.

Early in her place that morning, the uneasy movement that ran round the church as the congregation came in fell upon her heart as though a sheet of ice were being slowly drawn across it. She had gone full of the hopeful excitement of this surprise which was to please everybody.

Noel himself had looked round from the decorations to his wife with an uneasy suspicion, and with that look came her first misgiving.

Then followed those movements in the congregation; those glances of sullen disapproval and open indignation which she could not mistake. Poor Gertrude shrank back farther than usual into her corner; but the worst was to come. Mrs. Haye had not yet arrived.

Never, so long as she lives, will Gertrude Rashleigh forget the first tap of those high-heeled boots in the aisle, nor the painful beating of her own heart as they came nearer. Now that the thing was unalterable, she began to perceive faintly something of her own rashness and imprudence. What a time those boots were coming up with the strong-minded, determined tap, tap on the pavement! Never will she forget the rigid defiance expressed in the poker-stiffened back, the raised nose, the supercilious altogether that went on beyond her seat in the direction of its

own; that paused all at once; that took a calmly deliberate survey of the church; that turned round on those awful heels, and composedly walked out again.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE VICAR'S SPEECH.

'I will do anything you wish, Noel. Indeed, I am only too glad to think there is anything I can do.'

The speech sent an additional sting after the many which had been worrying Mr. Noel Rashleigh's conscience ever since that unhappy Christmas Day, but he replied composedly—

'Then be a brave little woman, and prepare to show yourself a wonderful hostess. You see we must give this party, and, as the vicar says, it should be before Lent. We ought to have done it before.'

'But, Noel, there will be so many. I hardly think our dining-table will accommodate them all.'

'Then we must have a leaf put in. But I believe it will do.'

'And, indeed, I don't think it likely they will come.'

Noel smiled. 'They will come. The vicar has made it known that he is to be here, and everybody likes to meet him. Besides—don't look so disconsolate, little woman—they will be curious to know what whim has struck the Rashleighs now.'

Gertrude did look disconsolate; there was no denying the fact. Again she heard the tapping of the high-heeled boots, and saw those hard, pale eyes meeting her own in their survey of her work; and she shuddered. No one had ever told her why Mrs. Haye went out of church that morning. Gertrude herself suggested illness; but she knew, and George Chester knew, that among the many thoughts and ideas contained in Mrs. Haye's strong-minded bonnet, illness did not figure. The storm had broken out, and the curate knew that the parish was like a beehive when a wasp has got into it. But what was to be done? George suggested that the decorations should be quietly taken down; and his sister, stung into callousness, said it was no matter whether they came down or not; wished she had never seen them; wished she had never gone after those horrible mushrooms, or met Mr. Frankton, who directed her to the holly-bush. For, to her utter dismay and wretchedness, Gertrude conceived the idea that Noel was hopelessly angry

with her. There was a change in his manner which she did not understand. He seemed to be so gravely solicitous and tender over her, at a distance, as though she were under a ban, and he pitied her. That he who did so shrink from observation of any kind, who was so singularly reticent and nervous, should be brought into such public bad odour, and through her means! This was the way she performed her wifely duties! This was being a good wife to him!

'It is all so very small and trivial,' said George, 'that I really think there must be something else, Gertrude, something besides these decorations. The only objection I have heard came from Mrs. Haye, and it is that the flowers distract her attention from her prayers.'

'Distract!' broke out Gertrude. 'If any one is distracted I should be. Tell her to take those red grapes out of her bonnet then. Why does she bring those to church to distract people? Who ever heard of red grapes?'

But upon the proposal to remove the decorations the vicar quietly put his veto. No! they should remain up until the proper time for removing them. Let Mrs. Rashleigh be patient; he thought he saw a way out of the difficulty. And so after the decorations had been down almost long enough to be forgotten, and the ferment had subsided a little, the vicar opened his project to Noel Rashleigh, whose co-operation he desired and obtained.

'I would willingly do this myself,' concluded the vicar; 'but it will come better from you, and be more likely to effect the desired end. You despise these trivialities, and dislike them; I cannot think it admirable that you should do so. Depend upon it, nothing tends so much to foster real kind feeling and goodwill as the interchange of these small civilities and courtesies of ordinary life.'

And the project was successful. That is to say, Mr. Rashleigh was right as to the acceptance of the invitations. Many reasons combined to render it improbable that any of those invited guests would be defaulters; neither were they. The Lisles and the Franktons, the Smiths, the Richardsons, and the Joneses, the village doctor and his little sister, and last, but not least, Mrs. Rodington Haye. When that strange assembly sat down to his table, Noel, acting host by his own will and deed, knew that if the thoughts of all could be collected and brought to light, the wonderful medley would be strongly

tinctured with enmity towards himself and his wife.

'My fault,' thought Noel.

And as he glanced towards Gertrude, and saw the painful efforts she was making to keep down the nervous tremors that would rise up to threaten her, down went that sting again straight into his heart to worry him.

There was about the whole scene an odd element of anticipation, of which every one in his or her secret heart was conscious, without understanding it; and to no one present was it more perceptible than to Gertrude, whose seat was anything but a seat of roses, in spite of the reassuring presence of the kindly vicar at her right hand.

All at once—Gertrude could never tell how it came about—the guests, the table, the room itself, had become one giddy mass before her, and the vicar was making a speech. A portion of that speech will be sufficient to quote.

It was not the first time, he said, that it had been his pleasant duty to express something of a feeling, the source of which must naturally be to him one of perpetual and grateful satisfaction. He meant, his deep sense of the unvarying kindness and goodwill which, from the first day of his coming amongst them until now, he had experienced from the whole body of his parishioners. His friends whom he saw around him would readily understand that this kind feeling and sympathy had smoothed many a difficulty in his path, and added its charm to many a duty which would have been but bare duty without it.

He wished them all to know his grateful appreciation of their kindness, and his satisfaction in the consciousness that his ministrations had been happily unfettered by those sad parish discords which are so disheartening a stumbling-block in the way of many a hard-worked clergyman. He did not attempt to conceal that these heartfelt acknowledgments were but the prelude to a further favour which he was about to ask from his friends. (Sensation.)

It would be out of place here, he thought, to eulogize or expatiate upon the revival of a more tasteful, thoughtful, and reverent style of church decoration for the festivals. His poor old clerk was, like himself, almost worn out and wholly helpless in such matters. The gimlet hole and the bush would be the utmost effect producible by their joint genius.

He had already thanked their hostess, Mrs. Noel Rashleigh, for her exertions this Christmas; he could not, of course, ask her to repeat those exertions at the

coming Easter-tide; but he hoped that these, his older and more tried friends, would not think him over-confident if he confessed that he had been depending upon them for help in this extremity. He was aware that the work was in reality hard work, but yet he was bold, as they saw, in asking favours—possibly because he had never yet met with disappointment from them. If these, his friends, would take the responsibility of the Easter decorations from his shoulders to their own he would take it as a great favour. He himself could not promise to help, for he had no taste; but he could look on and admire.

A few words as to their host and hostess. He felt a sure hope that he was simply expressing a general sentiment in offering to both the sincere and hearty congratulations of all present upon their marriage, a cordial welcome to Mrs. Noel Rashleigh, though they had made her, like a junior boy at his school, a fag on her first arrival; an earnest wish that, as a stranger coming amongst them, she would not find them wanting in that genial sympathy and kindly feeling which should draw all Christians, and especially fellow-parishioners, closely together. He begged to propose the health of Mrs. Noel Rashleigh, his new parishioner.

In the confusion of all that followed Gertrude had a dim, amazed consciousness of the enthusiasm with which this speech was received; of the reactionary advances towards herself; of being made in this reaction a sort of heroine; of wanting to cry, and being terrified lest she should be unable to control herself; of a strange desire to do something great for the vicar; to go to Noel, and ask him if he was angry now; but Noel was so busy amongst the guests, so unlike himself, so talkative, that she could not help following him with her eyes, though it was impossible to get near him.

'I knew if anybody could make peace it would be the vicar,' whispered George. 'I never heard a better, more tactful speech in my life. I shall reap the benefit of it as well as you.'

Gertrude scarcely heard him. She could not realize the extent of the reaction which the vicar's speech had produced. Of course the hearers agreed with him. It was their place to take up a stranger just coming into the parish, and welcome her and—patronize her. They had not exactly done this; in fact, they had been rather hard upon her. But it was not too late yet; they could

make up for it. And really she was very pleasant, and so was Mr. Rashleigh; they could not help acknowledging that a little prejudice had been at work.

And the remainder of that day was like a perplexed dream to Gertrude. Her chief thought was Noel, and she could not even speak to him; she even fancied that he purposely avoided her. If the people would only go!

She was conscious that all the conversation turned upon the now subject of church decorations; that enthusiasm about it had sprung up so suddenly as to be quite incomprehensible to her; that she was questioned; her books on decoration were brought out and borrowed; the pattern of her alphabet asked for. And everybody was so cordial that she wondered how she could ever have called them stiff. More wonderful than all, she gathered that in the projected Easter decorations Mrs. Rodington Haye was taking a prominent part; and a murmur in that lady's voice reached Gertrude that 'she thought wreaths very pretty indeed, and crosses admissible; but when it came to flowers she was not so sure—'

Even this was said in a mollified, yielding tone, which Gertrude had never heard from the poker woman before.

And then they were all gone, and she was alone with her husband in the deserted drawing-room, standing before him more timidly perhaps than ever she had done in her life before.

And suddenly he had put out his arm and drawn her to him, and he was kissing her forehead like he used to do before all this misery occurred.

'Oh, Noel, Noel, I thought you were angry with me! This dreadful party—that you dislike so much—I brought it all upon you.'

'Not angry with you,' replied Noel,

'but with myself. My poor little girl, I have been a bad, unkind husband to you.'

'No, no.'

'Yes. Well, you can creep as close as you like, and you can put your hand on my mouth if you like. I shall only kiss it, and it won't stop me. Gertrude, shall we let bygones be bygones? I have thought a great deal since Christmas; and I see that I have been cruel and careless. Look here. That ugly door, which I dare say you hate—I hope you do; you must if you love me—eh?'

'Don't be vexed, Noel; I do hate it.'

'That is satisfactory. Well then, that door is your natural enemy and mine. You shall keep the key, and let me have it for two hours daily. And you won't keep secrets from me again?'

'Never.'

'We will begin afresh. The other day I was wishing I could turn back in reality; but you see bought experience is worth all the admonition in the world; and I understand a speech of your aunt's now that I thought great nonsense when she made it.'

'Ah, Aunt Jeann. Now I may ask her to stay with us?'

'As many Aunt Jeans as you like, provided they don't interfere too much between you and me. It is a wonderful thing, but I feel like a man who has been asleep; and I'm sadly afraid the elements of jealousy are in me, and only want developing.'

'I like you to be jealous—about me.'

'And, Gertrude—'

'Yes, Noel.'

'We will have the pony-carriage. The only difference shall be that I will be driver instead of Joseph. Will that please you?'

'After all,' said Gertrude, 'what a good thing it was that I didn't know the right time of year for mushrooms!'



## CHARADES AND DUMB CRAMBO.



**T**HIS was how it was. You know we never intended to give a grand party, or anything of the sort; but we just asked in old Major Chutney and sister, with one or two others, to dinner; and then we met some young men out walking; and Fanny and Emmy were staying in the house with us; and so we thought the boys might as well drop in and have a quiet evening; and old stupid Miss Scratchley came in with her yellow wig. And as she is little Harry's godmother, why of course we couldn't stop her—could we now?

Well, she came first, and had her dinner, but couldn't make out 'why on earth the cook put pepper in the soup.' She found fault with everything; but you know that's always the way with her. And I don't be-

lieve she'll leave Harry so much as her old snuff-box; and that's not worth much. At any rate, she succeeded in putting the old major in a very much worse temper than he usually is; and he snubbed his poor old sister till I really thought we were going to have nothing but quarrels all the evening. I must get on to how it was we had charades. We were all sitting in the drawing-room, and the uncomfortable state of affairs caused by sweet Miss Scratchley had not evaporated, when in came Tom Lennox. 'Just the man!' we said; and taking him aside, I inquired of him, 'What can we do, Tom? it's as flat as can be. I don't know what we shall do, I am sure.'

'Well,' said he, 'let's have charades.'

'Charades!' I exclaimed; 'but there's no one to act, and no scenes, and no nothing.'

'Wait a bit, my dear fellow,' says Tom; 'we'll fix it. Get a heap of cloaks and hats and umbrellas, with any amount of towels and handkerchiefs for head-dresses, and, as for "no one to act," why, we'll all act—old Scratchley and all.'

Now if there was any point on which Miss Scratchley was particular, as she said, it was play-acting.

However, we got all Tom wanted, and put the things in the library, with a looking-glass and every accessory we could think of; and, as the young men had come by this time, we got a big sheet and pinned it across the large folding-doors so as to make a good stage of one room.

'Holloa!' screeched out Scratchley, 'what are you doing, Henry?'

'Oh, nothing, aunt!' I said; 'nothing particular; only a charade or two. Who'll act?' And before the old wretch could answer, up jumps saucy Miss Emmy. 'Charades! Oh, how jolly!' And Fanny and some of the youngsters joining in, got ahead of the old lady's 'Well, I never!' at which point she stopped, and I could see made a mental memorandum on the spot to cut us off with a shilling—or less.

Any how, we selected our party, and Miss Emmy, who is the old major's especial pet, insisted on his coming, and, as he said, 'making an old fool of himself,' in which part he shone conspicuously. A Miss Jones, also, was added to the force by persuasion. At first everything went wrong: the lookers-on, who stayed in the drawing-room, wouldn't talk, except my aunt, who recovered her tongue wonderfully soon, and informed my wife that she would never enter our house again. Such wickedness and profligacy as 'play-acting' and 'showing one's legs' she never put up with. In vain my poor old girl expostulated, and informed her we were not going to have a ballet; it was no use; so she was left to mutter. At this period my wife asked me what we could do with her; so I sent in some negus and a claret-cup—and an

especially strong glass for her, of the strength of which she knew nothing. We had a grand discussion in the 'green room' as to what we should do; and we settled, with the aid of some strong ale and the aforesaid Badminton, 'to play first at dumb crambo.' Perhaps you do not know what dumb crambo is, so I will tell you.

The game of dumb crambo is played in this manner. The actors retire, and the company settle on a word, that has to be guessed by the former, who are merely informed of the sound of the final syllable. They again retire, and think over it. When agreed as to what they consider is the word, they come on the stage and act in dumb that which they have fixed on. For instance, they are told the word ends in 'igh,' and as the spelling is unknown, they act shy, after this fashion:—Two young ladies take their work, and the curtain is drawn up, discovering them pretending to talk in an animated way. The door opens, and in comes rather boisterously a gentleman pulling in a reluctant youth, who, in his confusion, drops his hat and umbrella, and at length is forced into a chair. The ladies having risen, and bowed with great *impressment*, he sits on the very edge of his chair, and the ladies manage to get theirs on each side of the unfortunate, each commencing to make violent love to him. The distress of the youth is too apparent; and when one of the girls at last forces a skein of worsted on to his unwilling hands, he tries to retire, loses his balance, and comes with a crash to the ground, forming the climax. Should the company see the right word has been acted, they say so, and applaud: if not, the actors are hissed out, and have to try again.

We determined to try dumb crambo, and all the party had a great argument as to the word. Old Scratchley insisted on the word ending with 'teapot,' but being informed that was not one syllable, she relapsed into the sulks. At length they settled, and announced the termination to be 'ill,' of which we were informed, and we deter-



mined to act the syllable itself for the whole word, for if it was not 'ill' it might be 'pill,' and that would do nicely; so we had the sheet arranged, and got up our scene as follows:—The arrangements being completed, our curtain is raised, and, behold, Miss Jones lying on a bed of sickness, *i. e.*, three chairs and a pillow, the only light being that of a night-lamp; Emmy very neatly got up with a housemaid's apron and cap, and looking so sweet and bewitching that it would be a pleasure to be ill if attended by her. Fanny, very wise and motherly, in nightcap and dressing-gown, approaches the bed, pours some physic (port wine, as it happened) into a dessert-spoon, and, with Emmy's help, forces Miss Jones to rise and swallow the horrible potion. I would not believe a pretty girl like Miss J. could make such a face as she did on that occasion; and with which, and a feeble moan, she subsided on to her pillow, leaving her hand hanging down over the side of the bed (chairs I mean). She has a small white hand, and knows it too. Fanny looks at her compassionately, Emmy wipes her eyes with the corner of her apron, and cries piteously. All at once a knock is heard at the door, and in stalks Paterfamilias (your humble servant), leading in, like a tame bear, an experienced doctor (Major Chutney), who, as an appropriate introduction into a lady's bedroom, brings his umbrella and hat—a large paper frill from his bosom representing the stage doctor of the period. The learned man seats himself by the bed and feels the patient's pulse, putting out a yard of tongue from his mouth, as an intimation of his wish, eliciting from Miss J. a little red tip from her mouth, which appearing very unsatisfactory, the doctor waves his hand, and in rushes a maid with two handboxes, one labelled 'PILLS,' and the other 'OINTMENT.' Out of the first he produces a large ball of worsted, and tries to induce Miss Jones to swallow the same, terminating the scene by the young lady recovering health and strength, and the whole party rushing from the room, fol-

lowed by the hisses and laughter of the audience, from which we rightly inferred we had made a bad hit. The real word was too silly to notice. We guessed 'Still,' and all went in and sat on chairs without moving for two or three minutes, and, being applauded, were of course right. The next thing we did was, rather, fun. Tom Lennox, who cannot bear to do anything without talking, wanted a charade which he had been concocting on the spot. Now the very thing needful in affairs of this sort is to have a good manager, who can 'get up' the scenery and persons well, and Tom was just the sort of man, being asked to every party within his hail on this account. Well, he said, as if he had thought nothing about it, 'Oh, let's act *Barbarism!*' and so we did. We got the characters for the first half thus. Major Chutney begged off this time, and I left him in a corner with a bottle of ale. He was just getting talkative, and beginning some tale about an ayah and a chupattie, and an adjutant who had got hold of the chupattie—what that is I don't know, and as he did not mention the officer's regiment I can't find out; I know, of course, what an ayah is. Anyhow, as I said, we left him alone.

Tom Lennox we dressed up as a barber by taking his coat off, curling his whiskers, and tying on him one of the footman's aprons: this, with a comb behind his ear, completed his disguise. One of the youngsters, an Ensign Brown from the camp, we made into a barber's boy by merely taking his coat off and giving him a towel to clean the shop up with. Miss Jones was to act Lady Weeds, with Emmy her daughter Lady Cecilia. Miss Fanny was to act lady's-maid to Emmy. The looking-glass was placed on a table, and on another all the brushes, combs, bottles, bandolines, and everything of the sort that our establishment could boast of.

Curtain rises—*i. e.*, I hook it away with a walking-stick.

SCENE I.—A Barber's Shop.

Enter hastily BARBER. John, John, John, John, I say, you lazy rascal!

JOHN enters lazily, yawning. Did you call, sir?

BARBER. Call! yes, you idle, lazy rascal, I did call. Here, it is eleven o'clock, and Lady Cecilia coming to have her back hair cut, and nothing done. There's all the hair I cut off that bald gentleman, and the wig for him with the long hair—I mean the bald wig for the long-haired—but you know what I mean, laughing at me. Here, lend it me. (Snatches JOHN's towel, and gives him a push, and rubs vehemently at the glass, knocks down a box of small articles, and in the confusion enter LADY WEEDS and LADY CECILIA.) Oh, your la'ship! Honour'd, your la'ship. Walk this way, your la'ship.

LADY CEC. Ma, is this the shop? (Last word to be drawled out fine lady-ish.) I don't think I la-ike it. Well, let's see. Where's the ma-a-n?

BARBER. Here, your la'ship. Please to be seated, your la'ship. Very warm, your la'ship.

LADY CEC. Disgusting creature! Annetto (to FANNY, who has begun a flirtation with JOHN), my fa'a'n.

ANNETTE. Fan? Yes, my lady. (Hands her a smelling-bottle. JOHN seizes fan and gives it.)

BARBER. (Takes out comb and hair-pins, and lets Miss Emmy's hair down, winking to me outside the door.) How would your la'ship like your la'ship's hair cut, short, or long, or thinned?

LADY CEC. Cut a very little. And, ma'a'n, I should like to see some flowers.

BARBER. John, bring them harti-ficial flowers. Here, your la'ship; suit your la'ship's complexion; blush-rose, your la'ship; fine colour, your la'ship.

(Here her ladyship spies JOHN and ANNETTE kissing, or pretending to, and speaks.)

LADY CEC. Annetto, you're flirting. Come here. (Drops her fan on purpose.) Annetto, my fan. (ANNETTE picks it up.) Annetto, show the horrid man what I want. (ANNETTE does so, and is detected kissing her hand to JOHN. Up jumps LADY CECILIA.) Annetto, you are flirting; I shall stay here no longer (at which remark, being a preconcerted signal, the whole party exit in haste).

Much amusement follows, and the company consult among themselves. Half think that the word is Flirt, and half the right thing—Barber. No time is lost, however, for the second syllable, 'ism,' which is performed as follows:—My wife and I act the part of Master and Mistress of a house, and wait for servants to come and engage themselves.

Enter MISS EMMY, as a candidate for a cook's situation.

MY WIFE. So you're a cook, are you?

EMMY. Is'm. (This is supposed to be short for 'Yes, ma'am.')

MY WIFE. Oh! you are a good cook?

EMMY. Is'm; very good, mum.

MY WIFE. You expect good wages?

EMMY. Is'm; forty pounds a year.

MY WIFE (in astonishment). What! forty pounds a year!

EMMY. Is'm; and parquisites.

MY WIFE. Oh, I never allow perquisites!

EMMY. Oh yes you do, mum.

MY WIFE. Very good; that will do; you can go.

(When she is gone my wife talks to me, and declares I was looking at the girl's pretty face, which of course I deny, and in walks MISS FANNY, with bonnet and shawl.)

MY WIFE. Well, what place have you come for? a cook's, I suppose?

MISS FANNY. Is'm; a cook's, please 'm.

MY WIFE. Can you boil potatoes well?

MISS FANNY. Is'm.

MY WIFE. Are you tidy?

MISS FANNY. Is'm.

MY WIFE. Have you some nice chintz dresses?

MISS FANNY. Is'm.

MY WIFE. I don't allow followers.

MISS FANNY. Oh, no, mum! But my cousins may come to see me, mayn't they?

MY WIFE. What are they—soldiers?

MISS FANNY. Is'm, please 'um. One in the 'Orse Artillery, one in the Foot Artillery, one in the Guards, one in the Marines, and a Coldstream, please 'um: that's all, mum.

(Here my wife, seeing my amusement, gets up, pretending I am making eyes at the girl, and tells her to quit

the room. 'Is'm! is'm! is'm!' says FANNY, and flounces out in the most approved method.)—End of Scene II.

This syllable is discussed, and guessed at length, and the actors come forward to ask if the whole word has been found out. When it has been settled the ladies join the lookers-on, and we gentlemen prepare for the grand affair of the evening. Old Major Chutney, who had been at the Cape, as well as all over India and Thibet, insisted on our acting the word Chief. He was so obstinate that we gave in, and prepared for our parts. We all dressed up as Caffres, by blacking our faces with burnt cork, draping our manly forms in blankets and counterpanes, and decorating ourselves with impromptu ornaments. The major was most imposing; he got a doll's wicker cradle belonging to our little girl, and fixed this on his head, and with a shield (the cover of a saucepan) and a genuine spear he looked very grand indeed. Tom Lennox made him shut his eyes to be corked, and then painted his nose a fine red with some chalk. We then got a trunk, with a number of articles of apparel, and placed it in charge of one of the party, who remained in the character of an European with a white hat and umbrella. Never shall I forget the savage and ferocious howl with which the Caffre chieftain rushed upon his foe. With an impetus there was no resisting, he fell upon him, bonneted him with the saucepan-lid, and in two seconds the hapless Englishman lay dying on the sward—I should say, the hearth-rug. It was then we displayed our knowledge of Caffre language, for when the old boy said, 'Ayah, pane, ankosi benki ti coonda báh!' in we all rushed, shouting, 'Eestoo an, áglao!' and put an end to the agonies of the wounded victim, who lay writhing on the ground. The next was to take an inventory of the effects of the deceased traveller. The major—I beg his pardon, the gallant chief—waved his hand, and shouting, 'Baith, jow, urás, kuls!' we of course sat in a ring, and held counsel. The savages could not understand the various articles of apparel: on each garment a violent

discussion arose. The first thing taken from the box was a pair of trousers: after various essays, an ingenious savage settled the matter by tying it round his chieftain's neck. Next a couple of waistcoats were buttoned on—one round each of his royal legs. Of course, our obedience and cession of all to the major indicated his chieftainship at once. The hat proved a great mystery, but it was decided to be a most useful drinking utensil, and was repeatedly filled from a neighbouring stream, and handed to the savage despot, who at length flung it in the officious donor's face. What is this? The chief looks sideways into the box, holds up his finger to inculcate silence, and at length cautiously draws out a crinoline. The ladies were at once thrown into a great state of blushes and merriment, and the savages into an equally great state of astonishment. What could it be?—to catch birds? to keep prisoners in? No; the wily monarch found its proper use was to place in your enemy's path: his feet entangle themselves, and before he can recover, a few blows with the assegai, and there you are, as neat as can be. I forget exactly the various uses of the other articles found in the box, but they were all disposed of somehow; and as a finale old Chutney had everything heaped on his devoted head; and Tom Lennox, flinging the crinoline dexterously, netted the chieftain, and dragged him bodily off. As we supposed, nobody could guess the meaning of it, and we had to explain it, to our great ignominy. We then had a very nice supper, and much noise attending it, and under its influence Aunt Scratchley got quite confidential; and if she and old Chutney do not make a match of it (he has been married three times, and is a widower), why I think little Harry may come in for a good thing yet. We all drank each other's health, and wishes for many a merry Christmas, and broke up for the night. As I said before, we never did intend to have such a grand affair; but it has shown us, and I hope it may show others, how fun may be obtained with a little trouble.

## THE THREE EXCHANGES IN THE STRAND.

'LUXURIOUS Strand' was the term fitly applied, some two centuries since, by Middleton, the dramatist, to this main artery of our metropolis. In one of his plays he describes the Strand as 'remote from the handicraft scent of the City;' although it did not disdain to imitate the boast of the City. Gresham's Royal Exchange had then been built some forty years, and was celebrated as 'the Eye of London,' its milliners or haberdashers selling 'mouse-traps, bird-cages, shoeing-horns, lanthorns, and Jews' trumps, &c.' This celebrity induced no less a man than Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, Lord High Treasurer to King James I., to enter the field as a competitor with the Royal Exchange; and he built 'The New Exchange' on the site of the thatched stables of Durham House, which fronted the Strand, and which, Strype says, 'were old, ruinous, and ready to fall, and very unsightly in so public a passage to the Court and Westminster.' The plan was similar to that of Gresham's Burse,—cellars below, the ground-floor level with the street, a public walk; and on the upper story stalls or shops, principally occupied by sempstresses and milliners, and other trades that supply dresses. On April 10, 1609, it was begun to be richly furnished with wares, and the next day, King James, the Queen, and Prince Henry, with many great lords and ladies, came to see it, and then the King gave it the name of 'Britain's Burse.' A rich banquet was served on the occasion, at the expense of my Lord Salisbury. A ballad defaming the Royal Exchange, printed in 'Wit Restored,' 1658, elicited an answer containing the following allusion to a tavern that at this period was established in the cellars of the New Exchange:—

'We walk o'er cellars richly fill'd  
With spices of each kind;  
You have a tavern underneath,  
And so you're undermin'd.

\* The cellars of the Royal Exchange on Cornhill.

'If such a building long endure,  
All sober men may wonder,  
When giddy and light heads prevail,  
Both above ground and under.'

The New Exchange did not, however, attain any great success until the Restoration, when London had greatly increased: Covent Garden became the fashionable quarter of the town; and the New Exchange in the Strand was a place of great resort and trade for the nobility and gentry, and so popular, that there is scarcely a dramatist of the Charles II. era who is without a reference to this gay place. Its notabilities were very various. Among its olden theatrical associations, is, that at the 'Eagle and Child,' in Britain's Burse, the first edition of 'Othello' was sold by Thomas Walkley, in 1622. Here Thomas Duffet was originally a milliner, before he took to the stage for subsistence: he wrote, in 1674, the play of 'The Spanish Rogue,' which he dedicated to Nell Gwyn, who, he says, was so readily and frequently doing good, 'as if doing good were not her nature, but her business.' At the sign of the 'Fop's Head,' in 1674, lived Will Cademan, the player and play-publisher. 'At the sign of the "Blue Anchor," in the Lower Walk,' was the shop of Henry Herringham, the chief publisher in London before the time of Tonson. Here Wycherley has laid a scene in his 'Country Wife,' and Etherege a scene in 'She Would if she Could;' and here Mrs. Brain-sick, in Dryden's 'Limberham,' is represented as giving her husband the slip, pretending to call at her tailor's, 'to try her stays for a new gown.'

A curious picture of the gaiety of the place occurs in 'News from the New Exchange,' 1650, where we read of 'certain ladies called "coursers," whose recreation lies very much upon the New Exchange, about six o'clock at night; where you may fit yourselves with ware of all sorts and sizes. But take heed of my Lady Sandys, for she sweeps the Exchange like a chain'd bullet,

with Mr. Howard in one hand, and Fitz-James in the other.'

The stalls, or shops, in the Exchange had their respective signs; one of which, the 'Three Spanish Gypsies,' was kept by Thomas Radford and his wife, the daughter of John Clarges, a farrier in the Savoy. They sold wash-balls, powder, gloves, &c., and taught plain work to girls. However, higher fortune awaited the farrier's daughter, better known as 'Nan Clarges.' In 1647, she became sempstress to General Monk; she must also have been his laundress, as she used to carry linen to him at the time he was imprisoned in the Tower. Monk's first notice of Nan is believed to have been a flirtation of the Exchange; yet she could never have been attractive by her personal charms; her mother was one of the *Five Women Barbers*, celebrated in her time. Nan is described by Clarendon as a person 'of the lowest extraction, without either wit or beauty;' and Aubrey says 'she was not at all handsome nor cleanly.' In 1649 Nan and her husband, Radford, fell out, and parted. In 1653 she was married, at the church of St. George, Southwark, to General Monk, though it is said that her first husband was living at the time: no certificate of any parish register appears recording his burial, which, however, is not remarkable, owing to the imperfect state of our early registers. In the following year, Nan was delivered of a son, Christopher, who, according to that amusing gossip, John Aubrey, 'was suckled by Honour Mills, who sold apples, herbs, oysters, &c.' The father of Nan, according to Aubrey's 'Lives' (written about 1680), had his forge upon the site of No. 317, on the north side of the Strand. 'The shop is still of that trade,' says Aubrey; 'the corner shop, the first turning, on y<sup>e</sup> right hand, as you come out of the Strand into Drury Lane: the house is now built of brick.' The house alluded to is believed to be that at the right-hand corner of Drury Court, now a butcher's; and the adjoining house in the court is a whitesmith's, with a forge, &c. Monk's wife is known to have had great control and autho-

rity over him. Upon his being raised to a dukedom, and her becoming Duchess of Albemarle, her father, the farrier, is said to have raised a Maypole in the Strand, nearly opposite his forge, to commemorate his daughter's good fortune; and the original name of Drury Court was Maypole Alley. Nan died a few days after the Duke, and is interred by his side in Henry VII.'s Chapel, Westminster Abbey. The Duke was succeeded by his son Christopher, who married Lady Elizabeth Cavendish, granddaughter of the Duke of Newcastle, and who died childless. The Duchess' brother, Thomas Clarges, became a physician of note, was created a baronet in 1674; and after his son, Sir Walter Clarges, was named Clarges Street, Piccadilly. This is a romantic story, but of not the only Duchess associated with the New Exchange.

The next event is, however, of a more tragical cast. On a gusty evening in November, 1654, in the open walk of the New Exchange, Don Pantaleo de Sa, brother of the ambassador from Portugal to the Court of Cromwell, came, with two Portuguese friends, to join the promenade. They were conversing together on the affairs of England; and their discourse happening to be in French, a young cavalier who overheard it, and understood the language, told the Portuguese very civilly that they did not represent matters quite correctly. Whereupon one of the Portuguese gave the cavalier the lie; a scuffle ensued, when the three Portuguese fell upon him, threw him upon the ground, and strove to keep him down by kneeling on him; he, however, flung off his adversaries, who renewed the attack, and one of the Portuguese stabbed the cavalier in the shoulder. A Mr. Anthuser then interfered, reproaching the Portuguese for their dastardly attack of three to one; and then, recognising in the individual thus beset a friend of his own, one Colonel Gerard, hastened to draw, with the view of defending him. After some few passes, the Portuguese retreated; they came back in an hour, with

some twenty attendants, cased in breast-pieces and head-pieces, but Gerard and Anthuser had both returned home. Next night, the Portuguese came to the New Exchange, numbering about fifty strong, including Don Pantaleo, two Knights of Malta, and a certain captain clad in buff. They were mostly armed with swords and pistols, and wore either armour or coats of mail; and brought with them, in their coaches, hand-grenades and jars filled with gunpowder and stopped with wax, to burst open the gates of the Exchange, in case they were denied admittance. They had, moreover, boats ready at the water-side, to facilitate their escape in case of need. They entered the building in a body, each with a drawn sword, which so terrified the peaceable people of the Exchange that they sought shelter in the shops. Colonel Mayo, who was among the promenaders in the dusk of the evening, being mistaken for Mr. Anthuser, a pistol was fired, and the word 'Safa' being given as a signal, a dozen armed ruffians rushed upon the Colonel; he, however, defended himself with great gallantry, until a wound in the sword-hand compelled him to drop his weapon, when he was cut and thrust at in all directions, until he fell desperately wounded. At this moment a Mr. Greeneway, of Lincoln's Inn, came up to ascertain the cause of the tumult, when he was shot in the head by one of the Portuguese, and died immediately. Several other persons were more or less dangerously wounded. It was but a short distance from the Exchange to the King's Mews,\* and the intervening space was not then crowded with houses as at present; the alarm soon reached the Mews, whence a body of Horse-Guards rode down upon the rioters, several of whom were captured. The remainder of the Portuguese fled to the ambassador's house, whither they were pursued by Colonel Whalley, who, having surrounded the embassy with his troops, demanded that the Portuguese should

be given up. The ambassador, insisting upon his privilege, according to the law of nations, refused to deliver up the rioters; and craved time to send to the Lord-General, which being granted, he wrote to complain of the injury, and to desire an audience. Cromwell, however, replied that a gentleman had been murdered, and several other persons wounded, and that justice must be satisfied: he therefore required that all the persons concerned in this outrage should be delivered into his officer's hands, intimating, at the same time, that if he were to remit this demand, and order the withdrawal of the troops, the people would pull down the house, and execute justice themselves. He, moreover, informed the ambassador that when this demand was complied with, he should have audience, and all the satisfaction it was in his power to give him. The ambassador then pleaded hard for his brother and his comrades, promising they should be forthcoming if allowed to remain at the embassy for the night; but this was firmly refused, and the ambassador was compelled to deliver up his brother and the other offenders, who were kept in safe custody that night at St. James's. On the following day, Don Pantaleo and the other prisoners were examined by Lord Chief Justice Rolle, and committed to Newgate to await their trial. Meanwhile, Cromwell not only sought to enforce strict justice upon the murderers of Mr. Greeneway, but ordered also that the ambassadorial privilege claimed by Don Pantaleo should receive due consideration; and for this purpose, the most eminent lawyers not agreeing, a Court of Delegates was appointed, to whom was left the decision of the affair. Meanwhile, the Don contrived to escape from Newgate, but was retaken next day. He claimed to be a colleague in the embassy, but this was disallowed, and he was tried with the other prisoners in the Upper Bench of Westminster Hall. Don Pantaleo and an English boy, his servant, were convicted of murder and riot, and sentenced to death; the Don was beheaded upon a scaffold on

\* Upon the site of the present National Gallery, Trafalgar Square.



Tower Hill, and the boy was hung at Tyburn. Three of the Portuguese were, according to Lord Clarendon's account, convicted, and were executed at Tyburn; but Zouch states no other to have suffered than the Don and the English boy. The Don was conveyed from Newgate to Tower Hill, in a coach and six horses, in mourning, with a portion of his brother's retinue. On the scaffold, he threw the blame of the quarrel and the murder upon the English. After a few passages of devotion with his confessor, he gave him his beads and crucifix, laid his head on the block, and it was severed from his body at two blows. It is remarkable that Gerard, the cavalier, whose interference led to the affray at the Exchange, and who was the intended victim of the Portuguese, was, a few hours before the Don's execution, in the same place, beheaded for a pretended conspiracy against Cromwell; and that the Don's brother, the ambassador, on the same day, was terrified into a ready signing of articles of peace between the King, his master, and the Protector.

The next incident in the Exchange history is a tale of decayed nobility, which has been set off by the piquancy of Horace Walpole, who writes: 'It is said that [at the Revolution in 1688] the Duchess of Tyrconnell, being reduced to absolute want on her arrival in England, and unable for some time to procure secret access to her family, hired one of the stalls under the Royal Exchange, [Penant tells it of the New,] and maintained herself by the sale of small articles of haberdashery. She wore a white dress wrapping her whole person, and a white mask, which she never removed, and excited much interest and curiosity.' All the fashionable world went to visit her, and she became known by the name of 'The White Widow.' It was at length discovered that she was no less a person in rank than Frances Jennings, Duchess of Tyrconnell, wife of Richard Talbot, Lord Deputy of Ireland under James II. This lady was the Frances Jennings of De Gram-

mont's 'Memoirs,' and sister to Sarah Jennings, wife of the great Duke of Marlborough. The 'White Widow' preserved her *incognita* at the Exchange but for a few days, when her relatives, who had been ignorant of her extremity, at once provided for her.\*

Mr. Cunningham has gathered from the rate books of St. Martin's, under 1673, that the New Exchange was divided into the Outward and Inner Walks below stairs, and similar places above stairs. The Lower Walk was long a common place of assignation. In the Upper Walk you were met with such cries as Otway has preserved to us in his character of Mrs. Furnish, 'Gloves or ribands, sir? Very good gloves or ribands? Choice of fine essences?' The walks were a favourite lounge for the well-dressed fop about town, who conversed with the women at the stalls, and ogled the girls at their needlework; or, as Gay has pictured one of them on a snowy morning:

'The scampress speeds to Change with red-tipt nose;

The Belgian stove beneath her footstool glows;

'In half-whipt muslin needles useless lie,

And shuttlecocks across the counters fly.'

*Trivia*, Book II.

Steele, in one of his lively papers in the 'Spectator' (No. 155), has long letters from the Royal and New Exchange on the subject of the indecent license taken in discourse:

'They tell me that a young fop cannot buy a pair of gloves, but he is at the same

\* This anecdote was ingeniously dramatised by Mr. Douglas Jerrold, and produced at Covent Garden Theatre, in 1840, as 'The White Milliner.' Mr. Blanchard Jerrold says of his father's elegant little comedy: 'The author was bitterly disappointed that its pointed and tender dialogue, and its brisk action, failed to achieve success; more—as may be gathered from his own words—that personal enmity, carried dishonestly into public criticism, sought to put it aside as a thing in all respects worthless. But his was not a nature to be easily turned from a resolution. Firm resolve took the van with him, throughout his life. It was natural in him, after the failure of "The White Milliner," to write "The Bubbles of the Day," the piece which, according to Charles Kemble, had wit enough for three comedies.'

time straining for some ingenious ribaldry to say to the young woman who helps them on. It is no small addition to the calamity, that the rogues buy as hard as the plainest and modestest customers they have; besides which, they loiter upon their counters half an hour longer than they need, to drive away other customers, who are to share their impertinence with the milliner, or go to another shop.

And further on, Steele thus happily contrasts the toying at the two Exchanges: 'At the New Exchange they are eloquent for want of cash, but in the City they ought with cash to supply their want of eloquence.'

We need scarcely add that Mr. and Mrs. Pepys were frequently to be seen at the New Exchange: the prince of gossips, having left his wife at home, would, doubtless, say many fine things to the New Exchange girls; though he unreasonably complains that after the great fire of 1666, he could not 'find any place in Westminster to buy a shirt or a pair of gloves, Westminster Hall being full of the people's goods.' Why did he not go to the New Exchange?

In the heyday of its gaiety, the Exchange—the hive of industrious females, as Addison called it—made



this part of the Strand a centre of fashion, and its lodging-houses were eagerly sought by country gentlewomen newly come to town. 'That place,' says Pert, in Sir Fopling Flutter, 'is never without a nest of 'em. They are always, as one goes by, glaring in balconies, or staring out of windows.' However, the fashion of the place grew looser and looser: in the 'Tatler,' No. 26, we read of 'a certain lady, who left her coach at the New Exchange door in the Strand, and whipt down Durham Yard into a boat with a young gentleman for Fox-hall' (Vauxhall). There was also a 'Middle Exchange,' which

extended down to the river, handy for gallants to the boats; but the immoralities of this place grew intolerable, and it was removed. The New Exchange ceased to be frequented soon after the death of Anne, and in 1737 it was taken down: it had previously become a place for exhibitions; in 1736, 'The Complete Human Anatomy' was shown here. Various trades were also carried on; it became a looking-glass warehouse, and Mrs. Savage made it a repository for her celebrated stock of foreign and English china.

The accompanying view of the New Exchange is from an exces-

sively rare print, in the collection of the late Mr. Fillinham. The building itself is chiefly remarkable for its extent; the adjoining houses, with ornamented gables and bay-windows, are bits of Elizabethan London. The site of the Exchange is now occupied by the houses Nos. 54 to 64 inclusive, the banking-house of Messrs. Coutts & Co. being the centre. The place is preserved in memory in New Exchange Court, immediately opposite; there are tokens—'near New Exchange,' in the Beaufoy and other collections.

Exeter Change, a short distance eastward of New Exchange, was a sort of rival establishment; though seventy years elapsed between the erection of the two buildings. De-laune, in 1690, speaks of Exeter Change as lately built; \* it occupied the site of Exeter House, named from Thomas Cecil, Earl of Exeter, son of the great Lord Burghley. Upon this spot, three centuries ago, was the parsonage-house of the parish of St. Martin, with a garden and a close for the parson's horse. The Exeter mansion fronted the Strand,



and extended from the garden-wall of Wimbledon House, on the site of D'Oyley's warehouse, to a green lane, the site of the present Southampton Street, westward. The great Lord Burghley completed the mansion [with four square turrets: here he was visited by Queen Elizabeth; and here his obsequies were celebrated by a lying-in-state, though Burghley died at Theobalds.

The Change was built as a sort of bazaar, and when Exeter House

was taken down, probably some of the old materials were used in the Change, particularly a pair of large Corinthian columns at the eastern end. Like countless other imitations, the bazaar proved a failure; for Hatton writes of it, in 1708, some twenty years after it was

\* Mr. J. H. Burn recollects to have seen on the demolition of the building, in 1830, cut in the stone architrave above the window, at the east end, 'Exeter Change, 1670.'

built: 'The ground was held of the Earl [of Exeter] by lease, and this Exchange built thereon by Dr. Barbon (a very great builder); this, I am told, the Doctor mortgaged to the Duke of Devonshire and Sir Francis Child, who now receive the rents, and the said Earl has the ground-rents. Here are about forty-eight shops below, let to milliners, and rooms for as many above, where much is in the occupation of the Company of Upholsterers.' R. B., in *Strype*, describes the Change as containing 'two walks below stairs, and as many above, with shops on each side, for sempsters, milliners, hosiers, &c., the builders judging it would come in great request; but it received a shock in its infancy, I suppose, by those of the New Exchange, so that, instead of growing in better esteem, it became worse and worse.' The upper apartments were then let for general purposes. The body of the poet Gay lay in state in the large upper room, in December, 1732, previously to its interment in Westminster Abbey.

After being used for various public uses, the upper story was occupied as a menagerie, successively by Pidcock, Polito, and Cross: fifty years ago, the sight-lover had to pay half a crown to see a few animals confined in small dens and cages in rooms of various sizes, the walls painted with exotic scenery to favour the illusion; whereas now, the finest collection of living animals in Europe may be seen in a beautiful garden for sixpence! The roar of the Exchange lions and tigers could distinctly be heard in the street, and often frightened horses in the roadway. During Cross' tenancy, in 1826, Chunee, the stupendous elephant which had been shown here since 1809, having become ungovernable, was put to death by firing ball to the number of 152! Chunee weighed nearly five tons, and stood eleven feet in height. Cross valued the animal at 1000*l.*; and its den, of solid oak and hammered iron, cost 350*l.* The dissection of Chunee was a mighty labour: the body was raised by a pulley to a cross-beam, and first flayed, which it took twelve active

men near twelve hours to accomplish. Next day (Sunday), the dissection was commenced, Mr. Brookes, Mr. Caesar Hawkins, Mr. Herbert Mayo, Mr. Bell, and other eminent surgeons being present; and there, too, was Mr. Yarrell, the naturalist, to watch the strange operations. The carcase being raised, the trunk was first cut off; then the eyes were extracted; then the contents of the abdomen, pelvis, and chest were removed. When the body was opened, the heart—nearly two feet long, and eighteen inches broad—was found immersed in five or six gallons of blood; the flesh was then cut from the bones, and was removed from the menagerie in carts. Two large steaks were cut off and broiled, and declared, by those who had the courage to partake of them, to be a fine relish. Spurzheim, the phrenologist, who was present, was anxious to dissect Chunee's brain, but Mr. Cross objected, as the crown of the head must then have been sawn off. The skin, which weighed 17 cwt., was sold to a tanner for 50*l.*; the bones weighed 876 lbs.; and the entire skeleton, sold for 100*l.*, is now in the museum of the College of Surgeons, in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Chunee had achieved theatrical distinction: he had performed in the spectacle of 'Blue Beard,' at Covent Garden; and he kept up an acquaintance with Edmund Kean, whom he would fondle with his trunk, in return for a few loaves of bread. The greatness of the Exeter Change menagerie departed with Chunee; the animals were removed, in 1828, to the King's Mews; and Exeter Change was entirely taken down in 1830. The accompanying view is from George Cooke's admirable print of about this date.

In the economy of sights and shows we have gained considerably upon our predecessors. To-day one of the finest collections of living animals in Europe, the menagerie of the Zoological Society in the Regent's Park, may be seen for one shilling, and occasionally sixpence, whereas sixty years ago the sight cost nearly three times the first-named sum. An advertisement of

1800 runs thus:—'Since the arrival of the two noble Male Lions at Exeter Change, in the Strand, the concourse of spectators has been considerably more than at any former period since that truly grand Menagerie was first opened. These are both exhibited in the Great Room, with near two hundred other animals, amongst which are four of the largest Bengal Royal Tigers ever seen in this country. Admittance 1s. each. In a separate room are a stupendous Elephant and six Kangaroos from Botany Bay. Admittance 1s. each. Also, in another apartment is an Optical Exhibition, far exceeding anything of the kind hitherto invented. Admittance 1s. each, or the three exhibitions for 2s. 6d. A Skeleton of a Whale, 66 feet long, and perfect in every respect, to be sold cheap.—N.B. Foreign Birds and Beasts bought, sold, or exchanged, by C. Pidecock, as above.'

The following advertisement, of the same date, is ingenious:—'200 Guineas.—Two Hundred Guineas were offered last week at Exeter Change for one of the Royal Tygers, for the purpose of baiting it with bull-dogs; but the Proprietor, well knowing the dreadful consequences that would follow, would not accept ten times the sum for such a purpose; for of all animals the Tyger is the most terrible, having limbs superior to an ox, and talons that would tear a horse to pieces in a few moments. There are no less than four of these animals at the above place, together with a beautiful Lion, and a variety of Leopards, Panthers, Hyenas, near two hundred in number, and other Foreign Animals, among which is a large Male Elephant, with ivory tusks standing out of his mouth near a yard long.'

The Change extended from the house No. 352 to the site of the present Burleigh Street: it projected into the Strand, where was a range of small shops, in one of which the 'Literary Gazette' was long published; and in the house, No. 355, Strand, John Limbird commenced the publication of 'The Mirror,' in 1822, for which work the death of the elephant proved a profitable *pièce de circonstance*.

The northern foot thoroughfare of the Strand lay through the lower floor of the Change, where, in the last century, cutlery became the chief merchandise. Here, in 1765, one Thomas Clark took a stall, and stocked it with *rool*, lent him by a stranger. By parsimony and perseverance, he so extended his business as eventually to occupy nearly one-half of the entire floor with the sale of cutlery, turpery, &c. He grew rich, once returned his income at 6,000*l.* a year, and obtained the title of 'King of Exeter Change.' He was penurious in his habits: he dined on his stall, with his plate on the bare board; and his meal, with a pint of porter, never cost him a shilling. He resided in Belgrave Place, Pimlico: morning and evening saw him on his pony, riding into town and home again—and thus he figured in the print shops. He died in 1817, in his eightieth year, and left nearly half a million of money. One of his daughters was married to Hamlet, the celebrated goldsmith of Coventry Street, against whom the tide of fortune turned in strange contrast with the rise of 'The King of Exeter Change.'

Thus disappeared, one by one, the glories of the Change: the portly beefeater, flaunting in his cast-off finery of scarlet and gold, with his handful of bills of the menagerie; the familiar old Corinthian columns; Cross' sign-boards; and the little shop, looking eastward, noted for its oyster-suppers—have all departed; the bell which Chinee rang every night at feeding-time is no more heard; and even the clock-face on the house, which originally bore the words Exeter Change in place of the twelve hour numerals, no longer bears that distinction. Nevertheless, the Marquis of Exeter, a lineal descendant of the great Lord Burghley, who still possesses the property of the founder of his family in the Strand and its neighbourhood, attempted, some twenty years since, to resuscitate the olden fame of Exeter Change—the third of the Strand Exchanges—by the erection, upon his estate, of a small Arcade, leading obliquely from

Catherine Street into the newly-formed Wellington Street. Lord Exeter intrusted the design to Mr. Sydney Smirke, the well-known architect, who designed a polygonal compartment at each end of the Arcade, which comprised ten neat shops, with dwellings over. There were 'polychromic arabesque decorations,' imitation bronze gates,

and other ornamentations; and the street fronts, of fine red brick, with stone dressings, were in good Jacobean style. But the public gave the new Exchange 'the cold shoulder,' for the shops were mostly tenantless; the blight of failure, as a place of business or passage, came over the spot; there was an unbroken solitariness in its existence



which became ridiculous. The audience of 'one person in the pit' may be a pleasant joke for the humorist, but not so to the manager; in like manner, the new Arcade exhausted the patience of its proprietor. The site became desirable for part of the design of a new Music Hall fronting the

Strand; and within the year 1863 the Arcade disappeared. Its life was short, but not merry: still hereafter, upon this spot, some fond listener to the sentiment of 'marble halls' may associate, with that masterpiece of Drury Lane lyrics, the fallen fortunes of New Exeter Change.



## THE BROTHERS DIDDLEPORT.

AN ACCOUNT OF A RÉANCE LATELY HELD AT THE CHAMBERS OF  
JACK KASEL, ESQ.

*To the Editor of 'London Society.'*

SIR,—I beg to offer for publication in your Magazine the following account of a *réance* lately held at my chambers by the Brothers Diddleport and Mr. Fobsby, in presence of myself and several other distinguished persons, among whom I am permitted to mention Lord Downy, Sir James Greenhorne, Sir Edward Addlepaite, Dr. Gulloway, Captain Pry, Mr. John Gaper, Mr. Y. de Wake, Miss Frumpleigh, the Rev. B. Bellman, M. Chose (author of that celebrated romance 'The Château d'Espagne'), and Mrs. Muffington. The details of the phenomena which I am about to describe are of such an extraordinary and exceptional nature, that I should myself have been strongly inclined to disbelieve them on any other evidence than my own senses. I shall not, therefore, exact implicit credulity from those of your readers to whom I am not personally known. As for my friends, they are of course free to think as they please. In the following narrative it is my desire to confine myself as much as possible to *facts*. I shall not attempt to theorise on what I saw. Indeed the Brothers Diddleport wish it to be distinctly understood that they do not attribute their mysterious power to spiritual or any other agency. They simply possess a faculty which they can exercise under certain conditions; but of its origin and nature they declare themselves completely ignorant.

We were, altogether, about twenty spectators: of this number about half arrived before the rest, and spent the time before the performance (which was to begin at half-past two o'clock P.M.) in examining the room in which it was to take place. This, I admit, gave me some uneasiness, as several people, the ladies especially, began prying into corners and opening cupboards,

where I had for convenience' sake stowed away sundry pipes, tobacco jars, and a bottle of, *scheidam*, with which I happened to have regaled a friend on the previous evening.

Miss Frumpleigh, in her zeal that nothing should be passed over, put me to some inconvenience, and herself to some confusion, by opening a portfolio containing some of my studies from the *Life*, which were not intended for public inspection. After a close scrutiny, however, nothing was discovered of any importance except a huge cobweb which hung from the ceiling. It will be hardly necessary for me to say that this was quite accidental. Indeed, if it had been expressly placed there for the occasion it would hardly have availed the Messrs. Diddleport. Mrs. Muffington, however, who is near-sighted, insisted on its removal, which my landress soon effected with a long broom. This relieved my guests' doubts on the point, although it certainly may have thrown a little dust in their eyes.

We then carefully inspected the wardrobe which was to form the scene of one of the performances, and which had been sent to my chambers on the previous night. It was a gentlemanlike article of furniture, somewhat above the middle height, and of a dark complexion—that is to say, of a mahogany tint. I mention this particularly, as some ill-natured detractors from the good faith of Messrs. Diddleport have stated that it was grained oak, and some have even gone so far as to insinuate that it was stained birdseye maple. There is no foundation for either of these assertions. The cabinet is supported below the plinth by four short, turned legs. To preclude the possibility of collusion, it was moved across the room at the request of some gentlemen,

when one of the legs came off; and it was universally noticed that the cabinet became very unsteady until this portion was replaced, after which, strange to say, it at once resumed its former stability.

There is a small lozenge-shaped hole, or, to speak more correctly, orifice, in the centre of each door. This orifice is from three to nine inches long, and rather less across, except in the part where it is wider. It will be as well to remember these dimensions, as they materially affect a question which my later remarks may raise in the mind of the reader. While adjusting the cabinet in its new site, a portion of the cornice became detached, and we thus had an opportunity of ascertaining that it owed its original adhesion in some measure to the agency of glue. The doors moved with some difficulty on their hinges, and one of the company suggested that this was probably attributable to the fact that the latter had not been oiled recently. I am not, however, in a position to corroborate this opinion. In the interior we found a small piece of whitish-brown paper, which seemed to have formed part of an envelope, or bag. On further examination we discovered that the following words were printed on its surface:—

‘GEORGE BROWN, FANCY BREAD AND  
BISCUIT BAKER.’

I made a note at once of the circumstance, but cannot say that I attach much importance to it. My impression is, that the paper had once contained some substance analogous to the nature of a currant bun.

At a quarter past two P.M. the Messrs. Diddleport arrived. They are both young men of slender build, and a remarkably benign and pleasant expression of countenance. They were attired in an ordinary morning costume, and beyond the fact that the taller one wore a stripe on the outer side of his trousers, I do not know that there was any peculiarity in their dress worthy of especial comment. The younger one of the two had an outside pocket to his coat, which excited some atten-

tion; but having cheerfully submitted to be searched, nothing was found in it but a yellow silk pocket-handkerchief, which, in consideration of a severe cold from which he happened to be suffering, was immediately returned to him.

On receiving an intimation from Messrs. Diddleport that they were ready to begin their performance, I sent round to a marine storekeeper's in the adjoining street, and procured a dozen yards of strong rope, such as is used by sailors in the main-top-gallant-mizen-royal yards for reefing binnacles, and excellently adapted for our purpose. I directed the messenger to stop at a music-shop on his way back and bring with him a jews-harp, an Erard's grand pianoforte with all the latest improvements, two banjos, and a penny trumpet. These preliminaries concluded, the Brothers Diddleport stepped inside the cabinet and expressed their willingness to be bound by any of the company present. Sir James Greenhorne and Captain Fry at once volunteered for that office; and in a short time both the performers were securely tied hand and foot, and placed in the outer compartments of the wardrobe. In the centre compartment were deposited all the musical instruments which I have named, except the pianoforte, which, unfortunately, was rather too large to be introduced without dismemberment. The Messrs. Diddleport, however, assured us that, so far as the success of the experiment was concerned, the legs of the piano would suffice. They were, therefore, at once unscrewed and placed along with the rest, having been previously scored with private marks by Mr. Y. de Wake, to preclude the chance of any deception.

The doors were then closed and fastened on the inside. I shall omit any detailed account of the curious and unearthly sounds which proceeded from the cabinet. It suffices to say that the jews-harp began to burr, the banjos to thrum, and the penny trumpet to squeak with extraordinary energy, and in the most horrible discord. Stranger than all, the few first bars of a

popular melody, apparently executed on a pianoforte, issued from the wardrobe, although the keys of that instrument were perfectly motionless, as it lay flat on the floor of the room. We also distinctly heard the jingling accompaniment of some brazen instrument. This was afterwards explained to be caused by an electro-biological current passing through the castors, which were then immediately called into sympathetic activity with the notes outside.

In addition to these phenomena, I must not forget to mention that the doors of the cabinet, *although bolted from within*, repeatedly flew open, and the legs of the pianoforte were ejected with great violence. This I can the more conscientiously aver, because the owner of the instrument afterwards complained that it had been very badly used, and sent in a long bill for damages, which I had to pay.\* The legs, on being examined, were found identical with those which had been placed in the cabinet. The doors were now once more closed, and to prevent the slightest suspicion of trickery, the lights, at the request of the performers, were nearly extinguished. One candle, however (a Child's night-light), was allowed to burn, and by its rays, after a short interval, we could plainly distinguish a phantom hand which appeared at the orifice above mentioned. When the latter first came into view, it was presented with the palm towards the audience, and was waved gently to and fro. But at length it slowly turned round edgewise, if I may so describe it; the fingers gradually separated from each other, and became violently agitated, the little finger being stretched out nearest the audience and the thumb remaining just inside the plane of the door-panel. Mr. Gaper subsequently told me that on this occasion the thumb appeared to him to be in close contact with the semblance of a human

nose, and that he particularly noticed the fact, because it called to mind a familiar gesture used by street-boys to each other. If this were really the case, it seems to me to exhibit quite a new feature in this extraordinary phenomenon.

On the room being reilluminated, we opened the doors of the cabinet, and discovered the Messrs. Diddleport tightly bound as before, with every appearance of not having moved from the spot. Indeed the younger brother had experienced some inconvenience from being unable in this position to reach his pocket-handkerchief. I forgot to mention that while the cabinet doors were closed we heard some one sneeze twice distinctly. This circumstance, coupled with the fact of the catarrh above mentioned, excited no surprise at the moment; but it is remarkable that, when the younger brother (with the cold) was found to be on the right-hand side of the wardrobe, several people in the room remembered that the sound had proceeded from the left. Dr. Gulloway and some other scientific gentlemen present professed themselves utterly unable to account for this phenomenon.

After the elder brother had been untied, and while he still remained inside the cabinet, the door being partially opened, Lord Downy, who stood with his back to it and with his face to the audience, felt himself hit pretty smartly in the region of the dorsal vertebra, and at once turned round, declaring that some one had struck him. The first impression was that it had been by the elder Diddleport, but that gentleman, on being interrogated, declared that he was as much surprised at the circumstance as his lordship himself, and could only conclude it had been done by a spirit hand. In this supposition all the party at once concurred. Mr. Y. de Wake now entered the cabinet, and sat between the two young men, his hands being right and left on each, and (to preclude any doubt of his good faith) tightly secured to their persons. The doors were then closed, and the Babel of sounds recommenced. Several hands ap-

\* The account made out in the owner's name, and settled with the usual stamped receipt, may be seen on application at my chambers between 10 and 4.

peared at the orifice, among them the hand of an old soldier. After a space of from three to thirty minutes, Mr. Y. de Wake returned to the company, and affirmed that he was very glad to do so. It appears that, although his own hands were tightly bound, he distinctly felt other hands pawing his face, tweaking his nose, and pulling his hair. He assured us that it would have been utterly impossible for him to have done any of these things himself without knowing it. The instruments at his feet rose up; the piano legs danced round him, occasionally coming in violent contact with the tibia or shin-bone of his leg. This struck him all the more forcibly, because the tibia of ancient days was itself a musical instrument;\* and it was suggested that this may have caused some sympathy between the mahogany and the human leg. In addition to this, the banjo also floated upwards, playing a wild and plaintive air, and marking the time with emphatic blows at the back of his head. The penny trumpet uttered several piercing shrieks, as if in earnest supplication, while the jews-harp, after burring about his ears for some time, and making several ineffectual attempts to get into his waistcoat pocket, finally alighted on the bridge of his nose with a short cry of triumph. While these phenomena were going on, Mr. Y. de Wake assured us that he distinctly heard sounds which resembled stifled laughter at opposite corners of the cabinet, inside.

I omit mentioning other phenomena; an account of which, including some curious speculations thereon, has appeared elsewhere.

The next part of the *séance* was performed completely in the dark. One of the Messrs. Diddleport and Mr. Fobsby seated themselves amongst us. Two ropes were thrown at their feet, and in less than 2 min. 35.093 sec., as near as I could calculate, they were found tied hand and foot, their hands be-

hind their backs bound tightly to their chairs, their chairs bound to an adjacent table, the table tied to an ottoman, the ottoman firmly secured to a sideboard, and the sideboard nailed to a wall against which it stood. While this process was going on, the legs of the piano ran swiftly out of the cabinet and attached themselves firmly to the body of that instrument as it lay on the floor; the banjo rose from the table where it had been placed, and swung or floated round the room and over the heads of the company, several of which it briskly tapped in its transit through the air. A phosphoric light, accompanied by an awful smell of sulphur, gleamed out at intervals from different corners of the room, but, strange to say, did not illumine any of the visitors, who remained as much in the dark as ever. The jews-harp and the penny trumpet were distinctly heard performing the air of 'Home, Sweet Home.' This was considered to be a pointed allusion to the eminent spiritualist of that name, and excited much sensation. The bells throughout the house rang violently, and several double knocks were heard at the front door. One of the ottoman cushions was thrown with great violence at the head of Sir Edward Addlepaite, causing that gentleman to utter a sudden and cursory ejaculation. Mr. John Gaper, holding a banjo with both hands, requested that it might be plucked from his grasp, and it was almost immediately taken from him. Mr. Y. de Wake made a similar request with regard to his watch and chain, and shortly afterwards felt a hand tugging at those articles, but he stoutly, and I think very properly, resisted the attempt.

Mr. Fobsby then expressed a wish that his coat might be removed from his back. The words had no sooner passed his lips than the sound of a violent disrobing ensued; and here occurred one of the most extraordinary incidents in the *séance*. A light was struck before the garment (a most elegant article, by-the-way) had quite left Mr. Fobsby's shoulders, and it was seen quitting him like a spread eagle, the sleeves and

\* 'Quem virum aut heros Ilyn, vel acri  
Tibi sumus celebrare, Clio?'  
Hou. Od. xli.

skirts being stretched out diagonally in opposite directions. This elicited a general exclamation of surprise. It flew up towards the chandelier, where it hung for some seconds, swinging backwards and forwards, *à la* Leotard, after which it dropped to the ground, apparently exhausted by the effort; but on the lights being completely extinguished again, it rushed, or, to speak more correctly, *was rushed*\* back to its place on Mr. Fobsby's shoulders. Indeed, that gentleman was discovered, shortly afterwards, wearing it in the usual manner, except that the sleeves were turned completely inside out.† It must be remembered that all this time the cords, which were bound tightly round Mr. Fobsby's chest and arms, *outside* his coat, had not slackened in the least from their original position. Mr. Fobsby subsequently expressed his willingness to repeat the performance with his waistcoat, or any other portion of his dress. After some consultation, however, this offer was declined.

During the above performance the boot-soles of Mr. Fobsby and young Diddleport, to obviate the vaguest breath of suspicion, had been carefully numbered by Captain Fry, who wrote down the corresponding figures in his pocket-book, without showing them to another soul in the room until after the performance, when they were found to correspond exactly with those which had been marked on the leather. As some curiosity has been evinced on the part of the public to know the conditions observed by spectators during this portion of the *séance*, I may mention that we were all required to sit round in a circle holding each other's hands; and it was given out by Mr. Fobsby, that though this position was by no means compulsory, nor

even essential to the success of these experiments, any one who let go his neighbour's hand, or bided from the chair even for an instant, was liable to have his head broken by the banjo; and he added that, as in the course of his experience he had known some severe accidents occur in this manner, he earnestly conjured us all to keep our seats. I obeyed the injunction implicitly myself; indeed, could hardly have done otherwise had I been so inclined, for I chanced to sit between Miss Frumpleigh and Mrs. Muffington, who either through fright, or from some other reason which I cannot divine, seized hold of my fingers with a grip of fervour which is more easily imagined than described.

The performers sat, not within, but outside the circle of spectators, which included everybody else in the room except the elder Diddleport, who would have joined us himself had he not expressed a fear that in doing so he might have endangered the success of the experiment. He explained this afterwards by stating, that though he possessed the mysterious power of engendering the electro-biological current, he was not himself a good conductor of it, and that, as his presence in the ring frequently arrested its progress, he had found that the phenomena could only be insured by his remaining outside. Dr. Gulloway said that he fully comprehended the force of this argument, which he at once proceeded to illustrate by analogy. Sealing-wax and glass, he remarked, were both active agents of electricity under certain conditions, but each was found to be what, in the scientific world, is called a non-conductor. This interpretation, coming from such an eminent authority as the doctor, satisfied every one present. Indeed, it is only justice, both to the Brothers Diddleport and Mr. Fobsby, to add that they offered to submit to any reasonable test of their good faith which might be imposed. No suggestion, however, was made, except by Sir Edward Addlepate, who thought it would be advisable to drop sealing-wax on the closed flats of the performers, and affix his signet

\* There is, of course, a difference between the two expressions; but I prefer to use that which was lately employed in the description of (if possible) a still more wonderful *séance*.

† The reader may not quite see how a coat under these circumstances could have been worn in the usual manner; but of course this formed part of the phenomenon.

thereto. It would then be impossible for them to use their hands without the knowledge of the audience. The Brothers Diddleport said they could raise no objection to this scheme, provided the worthy baronet would first try the effect on his own fingers. This, however, after some hesitation, he declined to do, and the matter then dropped.

I forgot to mention that, during the first part of the performance, and while the Brothers Diddleport were incarcerated in the wardrobe, a long and delicate female foot, enclosed in an elegant Balmoral boot with a military heel and remarkably high instep, quivered for some seconds in the air. The ankle was well-turned, and drew an almost involuntary shout of admiration from all the gentlemen present; while the ladies indicated their surprise and, at the same time, their sense of propriety in a sort of subdued shriek. I may also observe that, during the above manifestations, several of the spirit hands were touched and grasped by Miss Frumpleigh, who stated that, to the best of her belief, they were all gloved, but that the kid, as far as she could judge, was not of a first-rate quality. In her opinion the gloves belonged to the class of goods known as 'Alpine,' which averaged one and ninepence the pair. The size varied from 'long sixes' to seven and a half. One bore unmistakable evidence of having been cleaned with benzine collas.

At the conclusion of the *séance*, a general conversation ensued on the subject of the marvels which we had heard and witnessed. The general opinion seemed to be that we were in duty bound to assure the Brothers Diddleport and Mr.

Fobsby that, after a very impartial trial and the closest scrutiny of their proceedings, the only conclusion we could arrive at was, that none of us could offer any explanation on the matter, except that, if there had been trickery in any form, confederates, or machinery, we had been utterly unable to detect either the one or the other. This was unanimously agreed upon, and the Messrs. Diddleport—who, I regret to say, have suffered under the most unfounded imputations—felt much gratified at this announcement.

Lord Downy was then asked to sign a certificate to the effect that the wardrobe manifestation seriously alarmed him. His answer was, 'Not if I know it.' I regret that the ambiguous nature of this reply has since caused some errors to arise in the public press. The natural inference in our mind was, of course, that his lordship meant that his fright would cease if he could discover any adequate cause for the phenomena. It appears, however, that this was not the case. Instead of any apprehension on the part of his lordship, there was only a little misapprehension in the minds of his hearers. We all, however, agreed to state freely in the elevated society in which we respectively moved that, so far as our limited capabilities permitted us to judge, we were quite incompetent to form any opinion on the subject at all, except that we knew nothing whatever about it. To this resolution all the party promptly and cheerfully acceded.

I am, Sir,  
Your obedient servant,  
JACK EASEL.





## In Memoriam.

JOHN LEECH, OBIT OCTOBER XXIX. M.DCCC.LXIV.—ÆTAT 46.

## I.

**C**ALLED in a moment suddenly away,  
 He passed from life, while ringing in his ears  
 Had been no sound of sob or falling tears  
 But laugh of happy children at their play.

## II.

Not old, but in the staid and ripened prime  
 Of a man's life he fell; and in an hour  
 When least of all was pictured sorrow's power  
 To veil in gloom that stretch of merry time.

## III.

Yet the cord snapped beneath the hidden strain  
 Of o'er-wrought brain and tortured nerves, whose strength,  
 Taxed to the uttermost, gave way at length,  
 When ended swiftly all the spirit's pain.

## IV.

So died he. From the ranks of living men  
 Whose thought and fancy are their nation's prize—  
 Work light, perchance, but tending to make wise—  
 Magicians of the pencil and the pen—

## V.

He who is dead stood foremost. Though each scone  
 He drew was taken from our life of prose,  
 Yet in each one he dealt his trenchant blow  
 Against all things and teachings false or mean

## VI.

On this our social stage. And if the chief  
 Mark stamped upon his labours was the play  
 Of humour and of fancy, yet the day  
 Which took him—to a nation's honest grief—

## VII.

Took the best limner of each lovely face  
 Of English pure girl-beauty. None have yet  
 Equalled him *thus*—none seeing can forget  
 His cabinet of loveliness. His place

## VIII.

Is all unfilled in English art. His name  
 Is and will still be loved by thousands—those  
 Who have hung o'er the pictures whence arose  
 Slowly but sure the structure of his fame.

## IX.

Kind! gentle! true! His life of modest worth  
 Is known to those who prize it. Now he sleeps:  
 And many a one who knew it sadly weeps  
 That kindly heart laid in its mother earth.

W. R.

## GOING TO THE CATTLE SHOW.

NO one, no, not my bitterest enemy, can accuse me of pleasure-seeking; I defy them. The five-and-twenty years I have lived a dutiful wife and thrifty mistress at Slowmansleigh, like any snail in its shell—five-and-twenty years come blackberrying—I have never had a day out with my husband but once a year or so, at most; and then never till the lambing is over, and the hay saved, and the shearing done, and the corn carried, and one is worn out with work, and all the fine weather gone by. So that when we make up our minds for a day's enjoyment, I think I have as much reason to respect it as if I had bought and paid for it in lawful money down; and I ask any sensible human being whether I am not right?

Now to reflect upon all I went through last Thursday, the very recollection makes my blood boil; as well it may when I think of the infamous— But I will proceed as calmly as my stinging nerves will let me, and will show some people that 'mother's temper, when she is up,' is no worse than the lion's roaring in the play we went to see last winter at Arrowbridge theatre, when the actor declared he would 'aggravate his voice to roar as sweet as any sucking pig.' My goodness! Didn't we laugh! I never shall forget in all my born days when the man came in again with a real donkey's head on his shoulders— (what was his name? it had something to do with it)—and that bold young woman with nothing but a frill of gauze round her waist! Oh, it was shameful! I wonder the police don't put down those Shakspeare's plays; but they never do what they ought. When there is a row they merely rap the heads of the little boys outside the crowd, and encourage the fighting.

Well, I and my husband, Anthony Slowman, (a better fellow never breathed the air of heaven before marriage and the Oddfellows,) with our daughter Keziah, fixed on going

to the grand West of England Agricultural Show which took place, as everybody knows, at Xeter, on Thursday last. Not that I cared a bit about it; I never did. 'What's the use,' as I remarked to Squire Jilly, of Brimblebog, but the other day— 'what on earth is the use of fattening a pig till it cannot see out of the eyes which were given it by a good Providence to see with?' No, mark my words, there is sin and wickedness enough in the world without that. Give me one of your home-bred porkers with legs that it can stand upon, and streaks of lean in the fat, and not go flying in the face of Nature with Thorley's food to produce an animal as full of oil as an olive.

They told us the train would leave Arrowbridge station at eight o'clock; and as those impudent young railway clerks always try to annoy people by putting their clocks ever so much before the proper time, I insisted on breakfast at five, and the trap ready to drive in at six to the minute; though we need not have done so as it happened, for Keziah and myself had to sit like monuments in a cathedral for three quarters of an hour outside the station, before they came to open the doors, while Slowman kept kicking his heels and whistling, till he worked me into a fever with his fidgets. Some folks are always so ready with their 'Didn't I say so?' and 'I knew how it would be,' as though they were wiser than King Solomon. But men are so provoking!

At length there was quite a crowd assembled, and others coming in parties every minute, so I suppose they thought it was time for the play to begin, for they rung the telegraph bell, and up went the little door where they give out the tickets.

'Now then, Mrs. S.,' says Slowman, 'which class shall it be, bare boards or cushions, or shall we run behind?'

'Mr. Slowman, I am ashamed of

you,' I replied; 'you will be joking in church next.'

So I walked straight up to the counter, and spoke as loud as I could, for there were plenty to hear me—'Three first-class carriage tickets and no bad half-crowns in the change, please,' and then went on and left Slowman to pay the damage. As if we were going in common second class with all the tradespeople and scruff of the town! Keziah and myself were not dressed for nothing, I can assure you.

Out upon the platform it was worse than May fair. Hundreds upon hundreds I should say; I thought we should never get to the waiting-room. French pianos going, and men selling ginger-beer and cherries, which reminded me of my little basket and shawl that I had put down by the door outside, and which, I need not add, I have never set eyes upon since.

For more than two hours I remained fanning myself with my handkerchief. I was ready to faint with heat and vexation, for my best gloves were lost in the basket, and Slowman had left me, as he said, to see about when the trains returned in the evening (such a mockery, when there was not even a sign of one starting!), and Keziah kept whispering with some one at the half-opened door; till, at last, I lost all patience, and burst wildly out on the platform, resolved to find what Slowman was up to, or to perish in the attempt. 'Keziah,' I cried hysterically, as I passed the bold girl, who pretended afterwards that she had not been talking to young Bullock who farms the next estate to ours, as if I had no eyes, and did not see him turning away from the door as I came out. 'Keziah!' I said, and seizing her by the arm I dragged her forward like a Samson to the edge of the platform, when, whirr! went by a steam-engine with carriage after carriage. I screamed out with all my might, for it was a mercy and miracle we escaped destruction; and as it was, a rough fellow, seizing me by the gown, tore my sounce to a rag in his endeavours to save us.

Whilst I was putting myself

straight, and scolding Keziah right and left for what had happened, up came Slowman with his mouth so full he could scarcely speak, though he was trying to hide it by wiping the froth of Guinness's porter from his lips with a new silk handkerchief, cost seven shillings last Whitsuntide.

'Here's a pretty go!' he said; 'do you know, my dear (the hypocrite! merely to cover the refreshments!), we shall have to wait here another hour at least, as this train will not stop?'

I could have slapped any one in the face.

'Not stop!' said I—

But at that moment some one close by affirmed that the train was returning to take up a few; and sure enough it came backwards into the station some minutes afterwards, with the passengers glaring out of the carriage windows at us like red-hot wild beasts.

The hollering and shouting that ensued was fearful. Talk of electioneering, it is nothing to an excursion train! You only wanted the candidate to fling dead rats and garbage at, and you would have believed yourself back, at the time of the Reform Bill, when Uncle Trueblue's windows were broken, and poor Aunt Plumper miscarried with twins.

'I will never go by this horrid train,' I cried, as Slowman, all excitement, was tugging like a madman at the handle of a third-class door. 'You may kill me on the spot if you like, Mr. Slowman, but nothing upon earth shall induce me to go by it—there!'

I turned upon my heel and shut my eyes, and pushed straight before me till I found myself again in the waiting-room, where through the window I could see Slowman running from carriage to carriage, as though the last day were come, and this was the only train to heaven. How he could so demean himself! I blushed for him. Though for the matter of that, the people were all the same, just as if they had whittings tied to their tails. I couldn't keep from talking to myself, as I stood there, to see them; and I fairly stamped when I caught sight of

our Keziah, as wild as any, hurrying off with that young Bullock, with the fellow's arm round her waist. The girl is mad, I thought, for I was beyond speech. Presently the door was dashed open, and in bounced young Bullock, out of breath.

'Make haste, ma'am, make haste! We have kept a capital corner for you, though it is only in a cattle truck they have put on behind.'

'Away, serpent!' I cried; and sinking upon a chair, my feelings overcame me, and I dissolved in tears.

A piercing steam whistle, whose excruciating shrillness turned my skin into gooseflesh, roused me from my misery. With my fingers in my ears I rushed to the door just in time to see Slowman dragged from an open carriage window which he had attempted to enter while the train was moving from the platform, when the porters had secured him by the heels, and pulled him ignominiously forth like a thief. I laughed scornfully, for I was half glad to behold him punished for his desertion and neglect of the wife of his bosom.

'If ever there was a finger of Providence,' I said as he came up to where I stood, looking sheepish enough as you may suppose—'if ever there was a finger of Providence, Slowman, that was one!'

I am good-tempered enough if everything goes smooth, nobody can deny that; or if they do, I will go further and show them that folks are never so put out as when they are contradicted flat. No lamb but would feel mortified at being left behind by an excursion train; no lamb but would be in tantrums at it. It is as much as to say you are not good enough for our company. Now I have my own opinion on that matter, and I will never sit under anybody's footstool, that I am determined. Consequently I do not mind admitting, that for the next two hours Slowman led a pretty life of it with me, and I have no doubt he was quite sincere in wishing himself at home and me at Jericho, though he need not have put himself to the trouble of repeating that wish

so often as he did. If it had not been that Keziah was actually gone on with that young Bullock, 'who,' said I, 'if he does not take care may find himself figuring at the Xeter assize court some fine day for abduction or arson, or something worse.' If it had not been for that, and that they kept on deceiving us with the promise of another special train coming every instant, I should have turned round and walked myself back every step of the way to Slowmansleigh, and have entered an action against the railway company the very next day for 'breach of promise,' and would have had the Lord Chancellor to lay the damages.

I may be deceived, for I am not the Pope of Rome, but I believe it was half-past ten or a quarter to eleven—I won't be particular to a minute—I only know the telegraph wires were buzzing so, that I expected each moment they would go off like a gun—when we saw the up signal turn slowly round, by which we knew our train was coming in at last. People had begun to look blank and limp with waiting, but now they bustled about as lively as crickets, and swarmed like ants in and out of the offices.

It is a matter of history how Jessie, the Flower of Dunblane, sang 'The Campbells are coming,' at the relief of Lucknow; but I never knew what it was to enter into her feelings, poor thing, till I heard the whistle of the engine and saw that train come sailing alongside the platform. I could have kissed the stoker for joy, though he was as sooty as a sweep. There was no room to spare, so people tumbled in just wherever they could. Luckily, Slowman and I found a beautiful carriage with a lamp burning on the top to prevent taking liberties in the tunnels, and a wool footing up to one's ankles, and cloth linings that would have been comfortable enough had it been winter, instead of a broiling sun, and the perspiration running in peas down one's face. It smelt rather fusty too, that's a fact, and I was scandalized to see the moths walking in and out of holes just as they do o' Sundays

in the faded green baize of Squire Jilly's pew in church, directly the organ begins.

A polite gentleman with large whiskers and a gold chain, worth a mint of money, sat opposite to me, and a more genteel Romeo-and-Juliet looking fellow I never saw. The curl of his moustachios spoke volumes of military romance. It seemed to me he must have been bred up in the Castle of Otranto, and that he held the Horse Guards in his pocket. There were three others in the carriage whose appearance I did not much regard, but he was as polite as could be, offering to let up and down the windows, and helping me in all manner of ways, quite a pattern to Slowman. Besides these there was a countryman with a large bundle which he pushed in under my seat, and a young lady, dressed to death, as they say, with a hat that would have turned Keziah's brain could she have seen it.

What with the heat and standing about, I could scarcely keep my eyes open; and I had not been seated a minute before I forgot all about the roses at the back of my bonnet, and resting my head so that they must have been squeezed into a pancake, I dropped asleep as sound as a roach, and woke up three minutes afterwards under the impression we were arrived at Xeter. Nothing of the sort. There was a porter at the window asking to see our tickets, and Slowman was slapping one pocket and then another as if that would create them, and then at last had to confess that he had handed them over to Keziah to take care of. Of course the money had to be paid again, and the gentleman opposite with the large whiskers and watch-chain I fancied eyed Slowman's purse quite rudely when he took it out. For though it was but a common leather bag, there was plenty of lining to it that is certain. Then, as they make a point of doing, the porter must needs open the door and slam it again with all his might, bawling out 'All right,' as if he would insult us to the last; whereby my dress got jammed, and the next time I

moved it tore a quarter of a yard three-cornered rent. With a screech like my godmother used to give when she sang, 'There was an old woman all skin and bone' (which is always associated in my mind with the smell of hot punch and the wind rumbling in the chimney), the engine dragged us sulkily out of the station, and of course you may suppose we were off at last. Nothing of the kind, bless your heart! They simply shunted us on to the middle line, no better than so many luggage vans; and there we stuck simmering and spitting (that is, the engine, you understand) till the clock had struck twelve, the express train passing malignantly up before us! I should have burst with spite had not some one sensibly proposed a game of cards. Croquet would have been more genteel, but Keziah was not with us, and there would scarcely have been room, I expect, even if we had had the balls. The polite gentleman with the large whiskers and watch-chain took a deal of persuasion, unless, as he said, the ladies would play. I was ready at once; but after the first game, which I lost, I felt so sleepy I could not go on, so he made up a rubber of whist with Slowman and two of the others.

I never woke until after three o'clock, just as the train reached Xeter. Everybody was complaining of the scandalous way in which we had been detained on the road, and Slowman was cursing and biting his nails worse than any.

The countryman, who, I told him, had no right in our carriage with a third-class ticket, wanted to get at his bundle, but I would not budge an inch, till he let out that it was a butt of bees, and that he merely wished to see if they were safe. Good gracious! I wonder I did not go straight out of the window, like a Jack-in-the-box. 'Lor, missus, you needn't squall so,' said the man (I give it in the low creature's own words; and upon my honour I only exclaimed, 'Gemini! Slowman!' and leapt up, creeping all over, as well I might). The polite gentleman with the large whiskers and watch-chain caught hold of my

dress; for I dare say he expected to see me every instant through the window, and a coroner's inquest sitting on me; and one of the others made me change places with him, though it was but a moment before we all got out at Xeter station, where the crowd was so great I lost sight of them instantaneously, though I looked everywhere to thank them for their politeness: for I was determined to shame Slowman, who I verily believe would have seen me stung to a strawberry without lifting a finger, he looked so glum.

Will you believe it? The Horticultural Exhibition was closed; and just as we reached the cattle-yard a violent tempest came on, and we were drenched to the skin, while the lightning was awful.

'My dear Slowman,' I said (I am always affectionate in a thunder-storm)—'my dearest husband, let us go back.'

And back we went, as fast as our legs could carry us, to a pastry-cook's in the High Street, where we found our Keziah and young Bullock in the long room behind the shop, with a lot of others as merry as grigs around a table covered with chops and steaks and sausage rolls, drinking Allsopp's pale ale in long glasses and talking sixteen to the dozen. It was still thundering, and I had not the heart to scold the girl, who indeed did seem overjoyed to see us, and kissed me again and again, and whispered she had a secret to tell me. Now, if I have a weak point it is to hear a secret. I believe if I were fighting a deadly duel with broadswords, and my adversary whispered she had a secret to tell me, I should throw down my arms at once. So I smiled at Keziah, and said there would be time enough for that by-and-by. For one should never listen to a secret directly. Waiting makes one's mouth water whether it is for currants or kisses. And I can tell you it is much nicer to put a secret off for a while, like a letter, which I always carry in my apron pocket for an hour before opening.

Down I sat and began to eat, for I had tasted nothing all day,

and the beefsteaks were done to a turn, and such baked potatoes, for all the world like snowballs in curl-papers! Slowman had been out of the room with that young Bullock, and now came back looking more cheerful than when he had a legacy left him. I own it exasperated me to see him so hand and glove with that young fellow; and I was preparing to say something very biting to the young scamp, who looked as if butter would not melt in his mouth, when we all know Arrowmore cheese would not choke him, when all at once our Keziah exclaimed—

'Why, father, do you know you have Mr. Bullock's purse stuck in your waistcoat pocket?'

Slowman went immediately as red as a lobster.

'Yes, my dear,' he said, hesitating, and looking at me. 'The fact is, I may as well out with it; I lost every penny I had, playing at cards in the train with a lot of blessed sharpers'—not that Slowman employed the term 'blessed,' but if you understand irony you may guess what he used—'and Bullock here has been kind enough to offer to lend—'

'No, Mr. Slowman,' I interrupted, cutting him short, as I laid down my knife and fork, and rose with dignity. 'Never shall it be said that you were beholden to that—' I paused to give it emphasis—'to that—gentleman. Since, Mr. Slowman, you cultivate a taste for gambling, and are become so childish as not to be capable of taking care of your money, it is well for you that you have a wife whose purse is at your disposal. Take it,' I said, imitating, as near as I could, Lady Macduff's tone, in the play, when she murders sleep, and plunging my hand in my pocket—

My conscience! I thought I should have dropt. There was nothing in it.

Upon examination, we found that my dress had been cut with a sharp instrument, and I as innocent as an unborn babe of it, and my purse stolen. Up went my hands and eyes. 'Well,' I cried, 'this beats Banagher, as the Irishman said,'



and, turning about, who should I see at a corner table but the polite gentleman with the large whiskers and watch-chain, whom I knew directly, although he was holding up a newspaper before him. The minute he saw me he laid down the paper and stretched his legs, and took up his hat, and moved to the chimney-glass in a leisurely sort of way, and then was about to pass by us out of the room. What possessed me I cannot think, but I touched him on the arm, and asked if he might have seen my purse which I had lost in the railway carriage.

'My good woman,' he answered, as grand as Doomeday, staring like a stone above my head, 'what are you talking about? Is the creature insane?' he added, waving his hand to Keziah to let him go by.

You may imagine how I felt.

'Do you mean to say,' I demanded, all aghast at his impudence, 'that we did not travel together in the same carriage this morning?'

He tapped his forehead significantly, looking round on the others and shaking his head (the scoundrel!).

'Poor thing! she ought to be confined in an asylum. Never saw her in all my life before, 'pon my honour.'

A suspicion instantly darted into my mind.

'It is my belief, you villain, you took the purse yourself,' I called out.

He made no reply, but tried to push by Keziah. I was determined he should not escape, if he had been a Hercules and I a midge: so I caught hold of his shoulder, held my breath, and clung like a leech. When he found he could not shake me off, he called for the mistress of the shop, and asked in a lordly manner whether she did not know the name of Captain Blackball, at the same time throwing down a card as if he were the Champion at the Queen's coronation. He wanted to know whether she called her refreshment-rooms respectable. He asked what she meant by it; and declared he had been grossly insulted, and that he would prosecute 'that female' (meaning myself), and

all who aided and abetted her, with the utmost rigour of the law. The shopwoman curtsied, and said she was sure she did not know any of us, but that she was perfectly astounded at any female accusing a captain in the army. At the same moment a gentleman and lady came on out of the back room, the gentleman calling out in a light, airy tone as he passed, 'Good-bye, captain; we shall see you to-night at the Park!' and then stopping, apparently surprised at the scene.

'Oh, ma'am,' I cried to the lady, whom I recognized at once by her hat, 'did we not travel together to-day, ma'am, in the same carriage with this gentleman with the large whiskers and the watch-chain?'

She stared at me for a minute, and then smiling languidly to the shopwoman, said, 'There is evidently some mistake. The woman is crazed. Come, captain, you will go with us.'

I could scarcely believe my senses. You might have tripped me up with a gossamer. I turned to Slowman to support my evidence; but neither he nor young Bullock were visible, and Keziah was crying like the rain.

I let go my hold on the captain's coat, and they had reached the door, when it was blocked up by young Bullock and a policeman, and the next instant brought Slowman and two or three more of the police, who made no ado but slipped handcuffs at once upon the captain and his fine friends, who turned out to be a part of a gang of swindlers that had been pocket-picking in every direction through the town. My purse was discovered the very first thing in the captain's pocket; so I got it again without the loss of a single pennypiece; for which you may be sure I was thankful enough to remember in my prayers; not that I cared so much for the money as for the little gilt thimble which had belonged to my godmother's aunt, to whom it had been given by her nurse's cousin, when she was a child in the nunnery; and has been an heirloom in the family ever since.

Of course there was congratula-

tion between us all. You would have taken that pastrycook's shop for the Houses of Parliament in debate, there was such a jabber; and I caught myself gossiping with at least six people at once, without knowing one of them, and shaking hands with young Bullock for his good service, before I was aware of what I was doing. I could not but be grateful to him, you know. He and Slowman then left us to go before the magistrates or something, and they tell me I shall myself have to appear as a witness when those light-fingered gentry are brought to trial. I have, however, made up my mind to be in bed that day with a sick headache or something infectious, even if I have to drink mustard and water to produce it. The barristers shall never have an opportunity of playing off their tricks on me, with their—'Now, Mrs. Slowman, speak up that the jury may hear you,' or 'Remember you are upon your oath, ma'am.' Oh, I have heard and seen poor witnesses worried into swearing black is white, and badgered to tears

many a time in the course of justice!

That was the tea we made when Slowman and young Bullock returned, and we all sat down in the pastrycook's back room, with kidneys and broiled ham that would have made a Jewish cardinal break his fast of a Friday! It is my firm conviction, and you would never turn me from it were you to talk within an inch of your life, that we should not have moved to this day had not the omnibus called to take us back to the railway station. For Keziah had whispered her secret; namely, that old Mr. Bullock, who I will say is a most respectable man, and owns more property than half the gentry round—that old Mr. Bullock had taken a nice estate for his son, about four miles from Slowmansleigh, and that young Bullock had—

There now I am beginning to cry again. It is very foolish, but I cannot help it. I suppose they will be married in the spring, and that will be the result of our going to the Cattle Show.

### OLD LETTERS.

How quick we credit every oath,  
And hear her plight the willing troth!  
Fondly we hope 'twill last for aye,  
When lo! she changes in a day.  
This record will for ever stand,  
'Woman, thy vows are traced in sand.'

LORD BYRON.

**F**AIR with the fairness of Dead Sea fruit;  
True with the truth of a siren's smile;  
Instinct with soul as an unplayed lute;  
Expert of fraud as a serpent's wile—

If she to-morrow will wed for gold,  
Flouting the rite with a perjured vow,  
Shall not the new take the place of the old;  
The sun of the *then* quit the ice of the *now*?

Ah! did he love her? He said so, in sooth;  
And she made him say it in mazed surprise:  
He swore to his honour to make it truth;  
And his true heart clave to her heart of lies.

Was there no churl of her own degree,  
No upstart churl with new acres broad,  
To come at her call and her slave to be,  
Till land married land in the fane of God?

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(See the Picture)

From the Gallery of Prince Orloff

OLD MASTER

tion between us all. You would have taken that pastrycook's shop for the Houses of Parliament in debate, there was such a gabber; and I caught myself gossiping with at least six people at once, without knowing one of them, and shaking hands with young Bullock for his poor service, before I was aware of what I was doing. I could not but be grateful to him, you know. He and Slowman had left us to go before the magistrates, and they tell me I shall never have to appear as a witness which is a light-hearted matter, and I thought to take a little time, however, to make up my mind as to how I shall deal that day with a sick headache or something infectious, even if I have to drink mustard and water to produce it. The barristers shall never have an opportunity of playing off their tricks on me, with their—' Now, Mrs. Slowman, speak up that the jory may hear you.' or 'Remember you are upon your oath, ma'am.' Oh, I have heard and seen poor witnesses worried into swearing black is white, and badgered to tears

many a time in the course of justice!

That was the tea we made when Slowman and young Bullock returned, and we all sat down in the pastrycook's back room, with kidneys and broiled ham that would have made a Jewish cardinal break his fast of a Friday! It is my firm conviction, and you would never turn me from it were you to talk within an inch of your life, that we should not have moved to this day had not the omnibus called to take us back to the railway station. The porter had whispered her words, namely, that old Mr. Bullock, who I well say is a most respectable man, and owns more property than half the gentry round—that old Mr. Bullock had taken a nice case for his son, about four miles from Slough, and that young Bullock had—

There now I am beginning to cry again. It is very foolish, it I cannot help it. I suppose they will be married in the spring, and that will be the result of our going to the Cattle Show.

#### OLD LETTERS

How quick we tread every path,  
And how her plights the willing took!  
Fondly we hope 'twill last for aye,  
When but she changes in a day,  
That crown will be ere long,  
'Twas then, thy vows are traced in sand!

LORD BYRON.

**F**ARE with the fairness of Dead Sea fruit;  
True with the truth of a shrew's smile;  
Tender with tend as an unplayed lute;  
Expert of fraud as a serpent's wile—

If she to-morrow will wed for gold,  
Flooding the rite with a perjured vow,  
Shall not the new take the place of the old;  
The sun of the then quit the lee of the now?

Ah! did he love her? He said so, in sooth;  
And she made him say it in mazed surprise;  
He swore to his honour to make it truth;  
And his true heart clave to her heart of lies.

Was there no churl of her own degree,  
No upstart churl with new acres broad,  
To come at her call and her slave to be,  
Till land married land in the face of God?

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[See the Poem.]

From the Painting by Frank Wybrand.]

OLD LETTERS!





Such were in plenty, for she had gold—  
 Such is the man she will wed to-morrow;  
 But she had a fancy that wealth untold,  
 That fathomless mine, a heart, to borrow.

To borrow, to borrow, but not to keep—  
 That were to hold it all too dear;  
 For practice, her hands its strings should sweep,  
 Her ears the full tones of its music hear.

Resolved, for a season she turned away  
 From senseless clowns with new acres broad;  
 Giving the poor and the proud *his* day,  
 Whose wealth was his brain and trust in God.

She made up her eyes to the depth of pools  
 Of love in the midst of her beauty's glare:—  
 Fledged with new honours, flushed from the schools,  
 How should a young man know to beware?

Ah! did he love her? He said so, in sooth;  
 And she trapped him to say it in mazed surprise:  
 He said it, and swore to make it truth;  
 And his true heart clave to her heart of lies.

Will she break it now—the heart she trepanned?  
 May Heaven forefend! though a spell she throw  
 Round it of ice, pray a magic hand  
 May touch it and bid its streams reflow!

If she to-morrow will wed for gold,  
 Flouting the rite with a perjured vow,  
 Should not the new take the place of the old?  
 Where are her thoughts and her fancies now?

Thrice hath the letter she holds been read—  
 Hath she been snared in her own device?  
 Why linger now o'er the hopes that are dead?  
 Let them be tombed with her artifice.

Ah! Memory whispers her hopes and fears,  
 Her anguish of doubt, till that letter came;  
 How the writer professed to her bliss and tears  
 She had lit once, for ever, a vestal flame.

The spectacled Prudence, her mother, is kind;  
 Patient and kind to the griefs of youth;  
 She will wink at a heart-throb or pang till she's blind,  
 So her child be but true to her untruth!

Culled from the rubbish doomed to be burned,  
 Of scandal, of fashion, of fête and fair;  
 Alas! is his love, with his letters, *returned*,  
 Coiled round a lock of her worthless hair?

He recks not. Why should he? Both to the fire!  
 Of her future this prayer the grace shall be:  
 'God send my sons be not like their sire!  
 God send my daughters be not like me!'

A. H. G.

## RESERVED MEN.

THERE is no quality of mind more disputed about than reserve. Some praise it; and others condemn it. But that is mainly because the disputants do not start from the same point. They have not first agreed upon its definition.

In its primary sense it is something which is kept back for a time of need, like a part of an army for some special emergency. When used to denote a mental quality it indicates something concealed in the mind, and hence modesty or caution in personal behaviour.

When used disparagingly it expresses closeness, the direct opposite of frankness and openness, which have an especial charm, and win favour easily.

It has its counterfeits, like all other good qualities; and where it is excessive it provokes dislike.

In its good sense it is an element of great strength of character; and for this reason, that it leads a man to pause before he acts, and to reflect before he speaks; that it secures to him the opportunity for self-defence, as well as leisure for employing his own resources.

It is impossible for any one to rule well who has not a certain amount of reserve. A king, a statesman, and a general must know how to keep their own counsel, else the one will lose his influence, and, perhaps, risk his crown; the other be outwitted; and the third lose the victory. None of them can afford to admit the many within the circle of their own secret thoughts and purposes. The ultimate end of each must be kept out of sight. There is a security in that atmosphere of mystery which more or less surrounds every reserved man.

It is a trite saying that no man is a hero to his *valet de chambre*. The meaning of this is, that, speaking generally, the closer we come to people the less we admire them; that we lose *prestige* in the same proportion that the wall of reserve is broken down which should exist

between man and man; for it is the tendency of intimacy to dispel whatever illusions we may have indulged respecting any individual, partly because our ideal is too high, and partly because nothing human is perfect. The old proverb that 'familiarity breeds contempt' points in the same direction.

If we seek for an instance of reserve, we need only cast our eyes across the Channel, where we shall find one as remarkable for its intensity as for its success. It is impossible not to be struck with the power of reserve in the hands of the present ruler of a warlike and capricious people. It is perhaps the most striking feature in that character, and it renders him peculiarly fit to rule over that gay, light-hearted, impulsive, and uncertain race. The public knows nothing of his plans till the word of command is given, and the sword is drawn from the scabbard. And hence a kind of awe surrounds his presence. Men scarcely know what to think or do. They may be on the very verge of events which his will is bringing about, and his eye only foresees. They may be on a mine to which his hand alone conveys the torch, and an instinct is abroad that all are in the dark as to the purpose of that man of reserve who holds in his hands, to a great extent, the destinies of Europe. It is impossible not to see this, whether we recall the few words spoken to an Austrian ambassador, which were the prelude to a fatal war, for which every preparation was afterwards found to have been secretly made; or whether we call to mind the memorable *coup d'état* by which he secured the throne; or consider the life-long habit of reserve which this remarkable man acquired in adversity, when he, in very deed and truth, laid by knowledge, experience, and judgment against the day of need, storing up the lessons he had so painfully learned, and keeping secret within himself the conclusions to which he had been led. Divest him of his reserve, and he will be-

come comparatively weak and powerless.

But—descending to a lower level—if we go into any of our public schools, we shall see how some boys are protected by their very reserve from dangers into which their more frank and open companions too easily fall. You cannot tell why, but they seem to live and move within a charmed circle. Respect is paid them almost involuntarily, and as a matter of course. No liberties are taken with them. Their reserve is a shield and defence to them. Pass over a few years, and see the same boys at the universities. Again it is the same story. Older in years, their character has acquired strength, and the secret of that strength was reserve; and, as years pass on, and these youths, having ripened into manhood, are found in the councils of the nation, the testimony of other men bears witness that they are to be relied on, and may not be trifled with; that there is a depth and an earnestness about them, a dependableness which, if combined with great intellectual gifts, insures success, and which, even if unsupported by any extraordinary talent, yet always realizes its value where caution and prudence are in demand, and but rarely found.

The reserved man is hardly ever off his guard. He is never the sport of those who play upon the frank and open-hearted. He can keep his own counsel, and bide his time, and set a watch upon his lips, and master his countenance.

But there is another side of the question. The medal has its reverse. When we speak of reserve as being a tower of strength, we refer more to the life of public men—to the part which each man has to play in the world. If a man would shine as a statesman or a diplomatist, as a barrister or a military man, he must practise reserve in all his dealings with the public. This is essential to his success. He will never be great without it. But there is something more valuable than even a great name. The friendship of a true friend is worth it all, and this is seldom gained by reserve.

It is necessary to friendship that men should be, mutually, well disposed to give and take.

If the giving is all on one side, and the taking on the other, the growth of friendship will be stunted; it will dwindle away. We are not by any means saying that it is necessary that friends should resemble each other in character. On the contrary, we believe it to be better, and more conducive to lasting friendship that there should be some dissimilarity—sufficient to give it raciness and to prevent insipidity. But we maintain it to be necessary to its existence that a man should feel that while he gives confidence he also receives it.

Reserve interferes with this exchange; and hence we see men who succeed wonderfully well in the line of their ambition, but who live and die without friends. While reserve is of inestimable service to a man in his public life, it is injurious to him socially. It keeps men at a distance from him; oftentimes repelling even those who have a legitimate right of access to him; and the very point which is its recommendation in one case becomes a hindrance in the other.

Again and again have we seen it happen that the most careful endeavours to make and cement a friendship have come to nothing without any apparent cause. Perhaps some peculiarity of manner, something in the circumstances of meeting, some intonation of voice, or wish expressed by some mutual friend whose opinion we value, has led us to desire that an acquaintance which we have formed should ripen into friendship. We adopt every means to bring this about, and believing it worth an effort, we do not allow ourselves to be repelled by any apparent coldness which may be, after all, only an attitude of manner, or our own fancy. We are not at first met half way but we hail the earliest indication of reciprocity, the first symptom of a thaw; and as time goes on, we think we have gained a friend, all the more valuable because of the difficulty in acquiring it. And so we go on perhaps for years, till

some circumstance or event takes place which reveals to us the fact that all our trust has been but the 'baseless fabric of a dream.' We find that, while we have been free and generous in our confidence, there has been no corresponding generosity. We have had to do with a niggard. The shell of his reserve could not be broken through, and we discover that we have known no more of our friend's mind and purpose than the world at large; that he has not given us his confidence till it has been, in a manner, wrested from him by the force of circumstances. We find that we have been all along investing our friend with qualities which he did not possess. We have pictured him as we hoped to find him, and not as he really is—reserved, incapable of true and generous friendship.

There are few who have not found their hands thus pierced by the reed on which they have leaned. Foolish so to lean you will perhaps say. But we deny it to be so. If it is better to trust and be deceived than to lose the 'bliss of believing,' as Mrs. Butler so well expresses it, so is it better to fail in gaining a friend, than to be so wary, so cautious, so cold, as to shrink from making ventures to win one.

The reserve that stands in the way of making friends is hateful. It prevents a man from ever getting outside himself. He may have admirers if he is clever, and toadies if he is powerful and rich; but if he cannot, for a time, turn his back upon himself, open the sluices of his own heart, and lose himself and his interest, his hopes and his fears, his joys and his sorrows generously in his friend's, he is not really 'worth his salt.'

It has been well said that there is a greater grace in receiving favours well than in conferring them. But the reserved man cannot receive them well. He cannot unbend himself to do so, and while he may, perhaps, expect homage and respect, he is himself undemonstrative. In fact, we generally find a man to be *exigent* in his demands upon our attention in proportion to his own undemonstrativeness to others.

When reserve is carried on into domestic life, it is of course a far worse and greater evil. A man may say that he is not bound to make friendships—no duty or obligation of any kind calls upon him to do so, and even prudence may forbid it, on the ground that so many have suffered through their friends. But no such plea can be urged where a man has the ties of home. If he has a wife and children, and shuts them out from all his interests and cares—lives his life apart from them, and allows them no share in his hopes and ambitions—can he justify himself? Yet have we not known those who have been strangers in their own home? Can we not recall any instance, within our own knowledge, of a young wife, in all the glow of her early love, gradually awakening to the fact that she is no helpmate; that she is but a toy, a bright jewel, perhaps an ornament in the house; but not a companion, not a sharer of her husband's trials, not a partner in his schemes and hopes? She entered his new home full of joyful visions of usefulness; but on the very threshold the veil was torn from her eyes, and she found that she was doomed to live a lonely life, to be a widowed wife because, in an evil hour, she had chosen for her husband a man of reserve.

As with the wife so with the children. They grow up under their father's roof, but have no knowledge of him. His eye and voice have no attraction for them, for they do not betray any tenderness towards them. Hours grow into days, and weeks, and months, and years without their ever being drawn more closely together. In their infancy and youth they were not encouraged to come to him with their griefs and joys, and so in later years they come not for counsel and support under graver difficulties.

It may be said that reserve is natural to some persons, and that it is therefore harsh to condemn it; but we are not saying what is its cause, nor whether it is acquired or otherwise. We are simply speaking of it in its results and effects. Nature may have endowed us with





From the Faisting by H. Schlossinger.

REVERIE.

[See the Poem.]



many peculiarities which are not desirable, and which it is the business of life to tone down, to counter-act, or uproot.

It must not, however, be supposed that every man who has the credit of being reserved is really so. There have been instances of men who have passed through life with that reputation but who have no real claim to it. Reserve generally belongs to characters of some depth, and has no fellowship with shallowness and superficialness. It may frequently happen that we do not get beyond the surface with some people, but that may be easily accounted for by the fact that there is nothing below the surface.

To be able to feel and to express

sympathy is a faculty which seldom accompanies reserve. Yet it is the food which nourishes friendship. It is impossible to go on for ever taking it upon trust without at least some occasional indications of the existence expressed by word or deed, for there is much truth in the old saying 'si vis me flere dolendum est.' We cannot hope to move others to tears unless we too weep. It is one of the laws of our being. The dull, cold, impassive manner suggestive of like faculties of heart can never kindle a fire in others. We must weep with those that weep, and laugh with those that rejoice, if we would brighten with our sympathy the chequered life of those among whom we live.

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## REVERIE.

**T**HIS a sweet secluded way  
Midst sunbeams, shadows, and flowers,  
There is peace in the winds that hitherward stray,  
Diffusing their fragrant showers.

Not even the startled hare  
Dashes swift through the dark-green grove,  
A spirit reigns in the charmed air—  
Is it sorrow, or hope, or love?

Who stands by the clustering vine?  
More fair than all flowers is she—  
A mortal form, with a face divine,  
And a child's simplicity.

Weary of fashion and talk,  
And the trifle's commonplace smile,  
She has left them all in the crowded walk,  
To speak with herself awhile.

Her lips may utter no word,  
Yet, her spirit speaks through her eyes,  
And an angel writes the record,  
While she looks on the boundless skies.

'O passionate heart of mine,  
Is this thy perfect estate;  
Have thy spring-time hopes here reached their prime,  
Is there naught more solid or great?

'Have I tasted the purest joy,  
Or must I evermore pine  
To find in the noblest no alloy,  
In the search no folly of mine?

- 'Twere sweet to be call'd fair,  
 If it left not a restless mind;  
 I long to grasp what I yet might share  
 Of a better and lovelier kind.
- 'Tears force a way to my eyes,  
 For I know not whom to trust?  
 And a woman's tenderest sympathies,  
 Like leaves, may be trampled in dust.
- 'O, is it not sad to stand  
 In a world so mark'd with power,  
 O'ershow'd by God's irresistible hand,  
 As weak as a summer flower?
- 'Love can scarcely cost me a sigh—  
 Love with its silly parade,  
 Its boasted golden power to buy  
 The blush of a modest maid.
- 'Life is more than a selfish rest,  
 Our pity should crush our pride;  
 These hands are ready to work their best  
 If a master-mind would guide.
- 'My bosom is not all steel,  
 It is tender enough when found;  
 I can feel for those that feel,  
 And would bind up some inward wound.
- 'I hardly can grope a way  
 To life's brighter, happier part;  
 O that some angel now would say  
 Where I may trust this heart!
- 'Till I see e'en a shadowy way  
 To that land where the young find rest;  
 If not to enter at once and stay,  
 Yet, to feel its light in my breast.'

## ANSWER TO THE SULTAN'S CHOICE.

## An Anagram.

[The initial letters of the lines form the answer.]

Perfection found at last!  
 Even a sultan's gold  
 Vainly expended fast,  
 Ensur'd that *he* was *sold*.—  
 Reckon'd he that his choice  
 In all things *perfect* was?  
 Look'd he to the face and voice  
 Or figure alone?—because  
 Figure and voice and face  
 Train'd up, without a mind—  
 Heartless—is void of grace—  
 Even so he'll surely find.  
 Probably he but sought  
 Enticement for the eye,  
 A beauty thus he bought  
 Killing her by-and-by.

ACROSTIC.

## THE MODEL'S STORY.

I DON'T know what it was that first induced me to become a painter. Every one was against it. My father thought it was madness. My mother said she was dreadfully disappointed at my foolish choice. My sisters wondered that I did not prefer the army, the bar, a public office, *anything*, rather than such a profession. As for Dr. Dactyl (then head-master of Muzzington School, where I was pursuing my curriculum), he privately informed me in his library that any young man who would wilfully abandon the study of the classic authors at my age, and thus forego the inestimable advantages of a university career, must be in a bad way.

The truth is, the doctor and I had not been on the best of terms. Long before I began to draw in an orthodox way from the 'antique,' at Mr. Mastie's atelier in Berners Street, I had had an idle knack of scribbling; and, in my school hours, this youthful taste frequently developed itself in the form of caricature. I believe I might have filled a portfolio with sketches of my schoolfellows. Podgkins, the stout boy, in his short trousers; Dullaway, the tall dunce in the fourth form, who was always blubbering over his syntax; Mother Banbury, who came to us regularly on Wednesdays and Saturdays with a tremendous basket of pastry, and with whom we used to run up a monthly 'tick';—all these characters, I recollect, were depicted with great fidelity on the fly-leaves of my *Gradus* and *Lexicon*. Nor did the doctor himself escape. His portly form, clothed in the picturesque costume of trencher-cap and flowing robe, was too magnificent a subject to forego; and many were the sheets of theme-paper which I devoted to this purpose. One unlucky cartoon which I had imprudently left about somewhere, found its way into the doctor's awful desk, where it was recognized weeks afterwards by Sinkins, a third-form boy, who had been sent to fetch the birch from that awful repository;

and whose information to me fully explained how it came to pass that I had lost at one and the same time my favourite sketch and the doctor's affections.

I need scarcely say that I made no endeavour to reclaim this lost property when I took my final *congé*. The doctor gave me a cold and flabby hand—remarked, with peculiar emphasis, that if I persisted in my wish to become an artist, he only hoped I should devote my energies in the *right direction*, and not degrade my pencil by—. I guessed pretty well what he was going to say; but as we saw the Muzzington coach draw up at that moment outside his study window, he was obliged to stop short in his lecture. I had just time to get my traps together, to give the doctor's niece, Mary Wyllford (a dear little soul of fourteen, who had brought me a paper of sandwiches), a parting salute behind the dining-room door, shake hands with my schoolfellows all round, jump on the 'Tantivy' coach beside the driver, and roll out of the town.

Of all the various fingerposts which Time sets up along the road of life, there are few, I think, which we remember better than that one we leave behind us on the last day at school. The long anticipated emancipation from a discipline which in our youthful dreams we think can never be surpassed for strictness afterwards—that rose-coloured delusion which leads us to look forward to the rest of life as one great holiday; are not these associated for ever with the final 'breaking-up'? What student of the Latin grammar ever drew a moral from his lessons?

'O fortunatos nimium sua si boni meritis.'

There is the text staring him in the face, and yet he refuses to listen to it. The golden 'age,' in his opinion, has begun, instead of ended. All care, he thinks, is thrown aside with that old volume of Euripides. At last he is to join a world in which the paradigms of

Greek verbs are not important; where no one will question him about the nature of Agrarian laws. Ah, *gaudeamus igitur!* Have we not all experienced this pleasure?

I had purchased some cigars at Mr. Blowing's, in the High Street (his best medium flavoured, at five-pence apiece), with the audacious notion of lighting one up at the school door; but when the time arrived, I confess my courage failed me. I waited until we were clear of the town to produce my cigar-case, and presently had the mortification of turning very pale before the coachman.

A month or so after that eventful day, I was established as an art student in Berners Street, London. I had a hundred a year, which, my father assured me, was an ample allowance, to live upon, and the entrée to Mr. Mastic's academy, hard by. The expenses of my tuition at that establishment were defrayed out of the parental purse; and when I state that fifteen shillings a month was the sum charged for admission, it will be observed that the outset of my career was not attended by much investment of capital. Mr. Mastic had formed a fine collection of casts from the antique, which were ranged around his gallery for the benefit of his pupils. There was the Fighting Gladiator stretching his brawny limbs half across the room; and the Discobolus, with something like the end of an oyster-barrel balanced in one hand; and the Apollo, a very elegant young man in a cloak, who was supposed just to have shot at some one with an invisible bow and arrow, and seemed very much surprised at the result; and the Medici Venus, whom one of our fellows always would call the *medical* Venus, on account of its frequent appearance on a small scale in the chemists' shops, bedecked with galvanic chains and elastic bandages for feeble joints and varicose veins. And there was the Venus of Milo, whose clothes seemed falling off for want of arms to hold them up; and chaste Diana, striding along by the side of her fawn; and Eve, contemplating

herself in an imaginary fountain, or examining the apple in a graceful attitude. With all these ladies and gentlemen in due time I made acquaintance, learned to admire their exquisite proportions, and derive from them and the study of Mr. Mastic's diagrams that knowledge of artistic anatomy which I have since found so eminently useful to me in my professional career.

Rumour asserts that Mastic had himself dissected for years at Guy's Hospital, and had thus acquired great proficiency in this branch of his art; which, indeed, he seemed to value beyond all others. He knew the names of all the muscles by heart, their attachments, origin, insertion—what not? Frequently I have known the honest fellow remove his cravat to show us the action of the sterno-cleido-mastoid; and he was never so happy as when he was demonstrating, as he called it, in some fashion, the wondrous beauties of the human form. Mastic never exhibited his pictures. The rejection of some of his early works by the Royal Academy had inflicted a deep wound upon the painter's sensibilities, which time could never heal. He talked with bitter scorn of the establishment in Trafalgar Square; hung the walls of his atelier with acres of canvas, and was often heard to remark that if the public wanted to see what he could do, they might come there and judge of his merits. I regret to add that few availed themselves of this golden opportunity. It might be that his art was of too lofty a character to suit the age; or, perhaps—as neglected genius is wont to do—he slightly overrated his own abilities. Certain it is, that as year after year he devoted his talents to the illustration of history, or the realization of the poet's dreams, these efforts of his brush, whether in the field of fact or fiction, remained unheeded in his studio, lost to all eyes except our own; and even we, his faithful pupils, did not perhaps appreciate them to the extent which they deserved. As we profited by his experience, we improved our judgment, and by-and-by began to find faults where we had once seen

nothing but perfection. I became a student of the Royal Academy, was admitted to paint in the 'Life School,' and soon grew ambitious enough to treat subjects of my own. The Preraphaelite school had just arisen. Men were beginning to feel that modern art had too long been looked upon as an end rather than a means, and preferred returning to an earlier and less sophisticated style of painting. They said, let us have truth first, and beauty afterwards if we can get it, but truth at any rate. And the young disciples in this new doctrine of aesthetics suffered endless ignominy and bitter sneers from old professors and fellow-students; but they did not care. They went on in the road they had chosen—painting life as they saw it. They represented humanity in the forms of men and women, and did not attempt to idealize it into a bad imitation of the Greek notion of gods and goddesses. When they sat down before a landscape, their first object was to copy nature honestly, without remodelling her form and colour to suit a 'composition.' And, as time went on, they had their reward. Yes; *magna est veritas et prevalebit*. At last their labours were appreciated; and I am proud to think that my first efforts were stimulated by the example of such men as Millais and Holman Hunt.

My father's allowance to me was, as I have said, only a hundred a year; and I soon began to feel the necessity of earning money. To a young artist without patronage that is perhaps an easier matter in these days than it was some forty or fifty years ago. Unless a man was 'taken up,' as the phrase went, by some wealthy patron—a Sir George Beaumont or a Duke of Devonshire—he could not then hope to make a living by his profession at its outset. But in these days of cheap illustrated literature, fair average ability may often find a field for work in drawing on the wood. I was lucky enough to become connected with a popular periodical, and managed to eke out my income by using my pencil in its service.

There is something very delight-

ful in handling the first money that one has earned. To know that you are under no obligation for it, that it is yours by the strictest law of justice, that you have actually turned your brains or fingers to some account at last; that your service in the world is acknowledged substantially in those few glittering coins or that crisp, pleasant-looking slip of paper; there is a charm, I say, about the first fee or honorarium which we never experience again. Hundreds may be paid into our bankers when we are famous. Our great-aunts may shuffle off this mortal coil, and leave us untold treasures in the Three per Cents; but we shall never look upon a guinea or a five-pound note with the same degree of interest which we felt in pocketing the price of our earliest labour.

I took care not to let this employment interfere with my ordinary studies. My object was to be a painter, not a draughtsman; and it was perhaps fortunate that I did not get more magazine work than sufficed to keep me out of want, just then, or I might have neglected my palette altogether.

One of the earliest commissions which I obtained was through the influence of a little lady whose name I have already mentioned—Mary Wyllford. Within two years after I had left the doctor's establishment he had received a colonial appointment; and when he left his native country, deeply beloved and regretted by his old pupils (whose pious tribute to his worth finally took the form of a silver inkstand), Mary came up to town to live with her mother, a young and still handsome widow of eight-and-thirty, who had just returned from the Continent. I had often felt some surprise that Mrs. Wyllford should have voluntarily separated herself for so long a time from her child; but Mary now made no secret of the fact that her mother had been in very poor circumstances, and that, as her uncle the doctor had kindly offered to take charge of her, Mrs. Wyllford, unwilling to become a further burden on her brother-in-law, had accepted the situation of companion

to a lady who was travelling abroad. The unexpected death, however, of a distant relative, had not only placed them henceforth beyond the reach of want, but actually would insure for Miss Mary a very pretty little fortune by the time she came of age.

The first thing the good little girl did after they had settled in their new house, was to persuade her mother, whom I found to be a very agreeable and accomplished woman, to let me paint her portrait. I have studied many heads since Mrs. Wyllford sat to me, but never remember one with which I was more impressed at first sight. Hers was a beauty of which it might truly be said that it improved with age. Just as the first autumnal tints only enhance the charms of what was last month's summer landscape, so some faces, I think, become more interesting in middle life than in the fullest bloom of youth. There was sometimes a sweet sad smile on Mrs. Wyllford's features, which told of patient suffering and unwearying love through many a year of trial. I did not know her history then, but had heard that she had married as a schoolgirl, and that the union had been an unhappy one. Mary never mentioned her father's name to me, and I took care to avoid a subject which I knew would be painful to her. She had now grown up a fine, fair-haired, rosy-cheeked girl of seventeen, and, after the renewal of our acquaintance, I confess that the boyish affection which I felt for her at school soon ripened into a stronger passion. In short, I fell in love with her, and, in the language of diffident suitors of the last century, had reason to hope that I was not altogether despised. But how could I, a young tyro, just entering on my profession, without prospect of an inheritance for years to come, how could I venture to make known my case without the possibility of offering her a home? As the little pinafores dependent on the doctor's bounty, she was an object of compassion; but as the heiress of 500*l.* a year, she might marry a man in some position—nay, would probably now have many

such lovers at her feet. I was determined, at all events, to defer saying a word to her on the subject until there was some prospect of my professional success. I was engaged on a picture which it was my wish to send to the ensuing Royal Academy Exhibition. If it were accepted, I thought I might venture to look for further commissions; and the bright hope of Mary's love stimulated me to increased industry.

The subject I had chosen for illustration was the statue scene in the 'Winter's Tale,' at the moment when Leontes stands transfixed before Hermione, hardly daring to recognize her as his living wife. I had had great difficulty in procuring a model for Leontes; but at last succeeded in engaging one through the assistance of a brother-artist, who sent him to me one morning with a letter of recommendation. He was a tall, well-made man, whose age perhaps was under forty—rather too young, in fact, for the character he was to personate, if his hair, which was turning prematurely grey, had not supplied the deficiency. I gathered from my friend's letter that he had seen better days—and, indeed, the moment he entered my studio I was struck by his appearance. His features bore all the evidence of gentle birth; and yet there were marks of want and care upon them which seemed incompatible with their refinement. His manner was particularly quiet and subdued, and, unlike most models whom I had engaged, he seldom spoke, even during the short interval in which he was allowed to rest from what is technically called the 'pose.'

After a few sittings he seemed to gain confidence, and, finding I was interested in him, gave me, one dark November morning, while a dense black fog obscured the light and rendered painting impossible, the following account of his life.

'You are right, sir,' said he, 'in supposing that I was born in a better station of life than this. I've been too proud—perhaps too foolishly proud—to own it to those who have employed me in this way before; but there is something about you



which leads me to trust you with my secret—or, at least, that part of it which I dare to speak of.

I assured him that I would not betray his confidence, and he went on, his voice trembling as he spoke:

‘I was the only son of an officer in the Indian army, who had married late in life, and at the time of my birth was living on half-pay in the west of England. My mother died when I was ten years old; and my father, who indulged me in every way as a child, dreading what he conceived to be the bad influence of a public school, determined to educate me himself at home. The motives which induced him to make this resolution were, no doubt, very good; but experience has since taught me that, in doing so, he made a grievous mistake. A private education may, indeed, answer very well in exceptional cases; but as a rule, and particularly when boys are waywardly inclined, it is the worst of all systems. When I went to College, at the age of nineteen, I had seen nothing of the world. I found myself suddenly emancipated from parental control, in the midst of dangerous pleasures which had all the charm of novelty, and associating with companions whose example no experience had taught me to avoid. Naturally impulsive in my temperament, I was soon led away, step by step, into follies and vices which I had never learnt to see in their proper light. I soon became deeply involved in debt, and, much to my father’s disappointment, left Oxford without taking a degree.

‘He received me with coldness, and even severity, and told me that if I ever hoped to re-establish myself in his favour, I must speedily reform my habits, and enter at once on the study of the profession which he had chosen for me. It was his wish that I should qualify myself for the bar; and with this end in view, I was placed in a solicitor’s office at H——.

‘I can conscientiously say that at this period of my life my habits were steady, and that I looked forward with earnestness to taking that position in the world which my

birth and education ought to have given me. I had, moreover, an additional incentive to industry. I became attached to the daughter of a gentleman who had been one of my father’s oldest friends. She had been left an orphan, and in charge of the lawyer’s family with whom I had become professionally connected. As we were both extremely young, her guardian, although he knew that my affections were returned, would not hear of any formal engagement until I had shown, by an altered course of life, that I deserved her. In due time I came up to London to read law; and had scarcely been called to the bar when my father died. Deeply as I then felt his loss, it is some satisfaction at least for me to think that I was with him in his last moments; that he freely forgave me the pain I had caused him; and—grieved as I am to say it—that he did not survive to see the subsequent misery of which I still seemed doomed to be the author.

‘Finding that I was now in the possession of a small inheritance, I determined not to leave H—— until I could assure myself of the prospect of a speedy union with her for whose sake I had laboured long and steadily, and without whose gentle influence I felt I might soon relapse into former habits. I had kept my promise. I had relinquished all thoughts of pleasure until I had attained a qualified position; and now I came to claim my reward. Her guardian admitted the justice of my plea; the dear girl herself blushing avowed her affection, and within twelve months after my father’s death we were married.

‘I found my wife everything that I had pictured her. Kind and gentle as she was lovely, she had ever a sympathising word for me in trouble or anxiety; and though her husband was always her first consideration, she gained the admiration of all our friends by her sweet and winning manner. I look back upon the first few years of our marriage as the happiest in my life. I had already begun to practise at the bar with some prospect of success,

when an unforeseen calamity occurred, which, combined with my own selfish conduct, completely turned the tide of our good fortune.

'It was soon after the birth of our first—our only—child, that my poor wife was seized with a dangerous illness, on recovering from which she was ordered change of air. The waters of a celebrated German spa were mentioned as likely to suit her case; and hoping to compensate by economy for what I might lose in professional practice, I determined to accompany her on the Continent.

'The little watering place to which we had been recommended was by no means expensive. We hired furnished lodgings in a good situation; my wife soon found the benefit of the air, and was on a fair road to recovery, when our baby was also taken ill. To a man who, like myself, has never been accustomed to the society of children, the weary noise and constant crying of infants are extremely irritating, and, having brought an excellent English nurse with us, I soon became glad to escape from a source of annoyance which I could not remove, and which would soon have tried a less nervous man than I then was. Unfortunately the adjoining town—like most German spas—had its *kursaal*, and its gaming-table. At first the beauty of the gardens there, which were laid out with great taste, attracted me. An excellent band played on the grounds; and when my wife was prevented by her domestic duties from accompanying me, I frequently walked there alone, wondering that so many people could bear to throng those close and crowded rooms, when there was so much that was attractive outside.

'One unlucky morning a heavy shower of rain compelled me to take shelter within the building. I walked about from room to room to wile away the time, and at last found myself by the rouge-et-noir table. At first I looked on out of curiosity; and was surprised to find, after all I had heard of the horrors of gambling, that here it was conducted in so quiet and orderly a manner. I

watched the croupiers, now raking in, now doling out the glittering coin. I watched the players, men, women, even children, throwing down their florins with apparently a listless air. I little thought beneath that assumed indifference what aching brows and anxious hearts were there. A little girl of ten had just won a large heap of gold, and ran away with it to her mother, who was knitting on a bench outside. How well I remember her smiling happy face as she poured the money into the woman's lap. . . (Good God! what may that mother have since had to answer for?) . . . I could resist no longer. I flung down a napoleon, and presently doubled my stakes—another, and won again. I left the table richer by some pounds than when I went to it. Would that I had lost every sou in my pocket! I might then have left the rooms forever. As it was, encouraged by success, I went the next day, and the next—sometimes losing, sometimes winning. At last I grew bolder, and played for higher stakes, and then . . . why should I linger over the details of this misery? It is an old story. I went on and on, incurring fearful losses—still hoping to retrench—and rose at length from that accursed board—a beggar.

'If even then I had had the courage to tell my wife everything, to implore her forgiveness, it might not have been too late to retrieve my fortune, or at least have gained our bread in some humble, but honest employment. But I dared not. I have braved since many a danger by sea and land, and faced what seemed to be inevitable death in many shapes, but I could not then endure to meet her calm sweet face—to take our child upon my knee again, and bear the agony that must ensue from such confession. I knew that my wife expected her old guardian and his family to join us the day after my ruin was completed. I knew that at least the little property she would inherit on coming of age would be hers. Little as it was, it might keep them from starvation. Why should I return to a home which I had

blighted, and drag those innocents down into the slough of misery which my own folly had created? I was still young, strong, and healthy, and I determined to seek my fortune alone—to earn subsistence by the sweat of labour. My mind was made up. I wrote a few hurried lines to my wife, and then tore myself away—from her—from my little one, for ever.

My life since that never-to-be-forgotten day has been one of extraordinary vicissitude; my means sometimes rising to the level of a competence, sometimes reducing me to the verge of mendicancy. For years past I have sought my living in different countries, and in various ways, and had nearly realized a little fortune in California, as a gold-digger, when I lost everything on the voyage home by shipwreck. I worked the rest of my passage to England before the mast, and an artist who was on board, knowing my straitened circumstances, gave me his address in London, and has since employed me as a model. This led to other introductions, and among others to yourself, sir. You were good enough to express an interest in me, and I have told you my story; but I beseech you, spare me the sad humiliation which a knowledge of my previous life would surely bring me in the eyes of those from whom at present I must earn my living. I have suffered long and bitterly for the past, though, God knows, not more than I deserve. But I still retain pride enough to beg that you will not inquire my name. Let me be known to you and to your friends as "George," the artist's model.

The fog had cleared away at the conclusion of this strange recital, but I had no heart to paint that day. I was almost sorry I had heard poor 'George's' story. I was in no position to help him, and the aspect of his bronzed and weather-beaten face, now rather excited my sympathy as a man than raised my admiration as an artist. It is lucky, thought I, that the head of Leontes is nearly finished; this story would have altered its character consider-

ably on my canvas. The man was fit for better things than this—yet how could I help him? I was only just beginning to support myself—and moreover, if I had had the means, I felt sure he would have accepted nothing in the form of charity. Warmly expressing my sympathy, and assuring him that he had not misplaced his confidence, I excused myself from further work that afternoon, determining, in the mean time, to reflect on the best means to adopt for his assistance. He thanked me for what I had said, promised to return on the following day, and went off to fulfil another engagement.

It was only when he had gone that I remembered many questions which I should have liked to ask him respecting the fate of those whom he had so cruelly deserted. And yet if they had been alive—if he had tried, or wished to find them out again—would he not have told me? At one moment I felt ashamed for commiserating a man who had thus selfishly abandoned those who should have been dearest to him (even under the circumstances which he had detailed); at another I realized the bitter trials he had undergone;—thought of the anguish he must have endured, before he could make up his mind to take that fatal step, and felt how heavy had been his punishment.

I determined to consult my good benefactress, Mrs. Wyllford, on the subject. She was coming the next morning with her daughter, to look at my picture. I confess that the prospect of seeing Mary generally put everything else out of my head; but on this occasion I was not sorry, when the time arrived, to find that her mother entered my studio alone. The 'little housekeeper,' as she used playfully to call her daughter, had been detained by some domestic matters, and would follow her presently.

I thought I would first show Mrs. Wyllford my picture, and then, while his portrait was before her, detail the outline of poor 'George's' story, and endeavour to enlist her sympathies in his behalf. She sat down before the easel, looking, as I

thought, younger and prettier than she had ever seemed before. The subject I had chosen was familiar to her—indeed she had herself suggested it. Camillo was supposed to be addressing Leontes in the lines—

'My lord, your sorrow was too sore laid on :  
Which sixteen winters cannot blow away,  
So many summers dry: scarce any joy  
Did ever so long live ; no sorrow,  
But killed itself much sooner.'

She kindly praised the attitude of Hermione, the dresses and accessories of the picture, which I had studied with some care. At last her eye rested on the figure of Leontes. She looked at it long and earnestly,

'I want you to be interested in that head,' I said at length, in joke.

'Why?' said she quickly, and growing, as I thought, rather pale as she spoke. 'Was it studied from nature? I see you have only just finished it: the—the paint is hardly dry, and—would you mind opening the window?—the smell of the oil is a little too strong for me.'

My studio window was one of those old-fashioned lumbering contrivances which swing on a pivot. I went behind the chair to comply with her request, and while engaged in arranging a prop to keep the sash-frame in its place, I began to tell her briefly the story of my model's life. I was interrupted by a loud cry of pain, and turned round to find Mrs. Wyllford falling from her chair. I rushed to her assistance, and found that she had already fainted. There was water in the adjoining room, and I hastened to fetch it. As I hurried back I was met by George, who had just come to keep his appointment, and to whom I hastily explained what had happened. Between us we lifted the poor lady up, and laid her on the sofa. In doing this, her head had fallen on my arm, and it was

not until I raised it, that we saw how deadly pale she was. I poured some water between her lips and begged George to get some doctor's help without delay. But he stood like one transfixed, muttering incoherently.

'For goodness' sake,' I said, 'make haste—no time is to be lost! What is the matter?'

'I think I am going mad,' said he as he fell upon his knees beside the couch. 'Raise her head a little more—this way, boy, *this way*,' he shrieked, in pitiable accents. 'Heavens! how like she is to—Mary—Mary.—O God! *it is my wife herself!*'

It was indeed the wife that he had left ten years ago—who had survived his cruel desertion—struggled with poverty and many trials—maintained herself heroically by her own exertions, and was now, thank God! in a position to save him from the misery which his folly and selfishness had occasioned. She had recognised his portrait while I was telling her George Wyllford's story, little thinking how closely it was interwoven with her own; and it was the sudden shock which occasioned her swoon. I have little more to add in explanation. Within twelve months from the date of this event, I married Mary Wyllford. Her father is an altered man. His wife's fortune was an ample one, but he never spent a penny of it without her consent. My picture was accepted at the Royal Academy Exhibition, and, wonderful to relate, was well hung. Since then I have painted from hundreds of men, women, and children; but I can safely say that I never heard from any of my sitters, any narrative which has interested me so much as the Model's Story.

C. L. E.





Drawn by Rebecca Solomon.

"At last her eye rested on the figure of Leontes : she looked at it long and curiously."

[See "The Model's Story."

thought, younger and prettier than she had ever seemed before. The subject I had chosen was familiar to her—indeed she had herself suggested it. Camilla was supposed to be addressing Leantes in the house—

"My lord, your surface was too deep till now;  
Which others whiter cannot know;  
Do many summers dry; more and yet  
Told even so long live; yet scarce  
Not killed itself much more."

She kindly pointed the mistake of Hermione, the dramatic representation of the picture, when I had studied with some care. As I had her eye rested on the figure of Leantes, she looked at it long and earnestly.

"I want you to be interested in that head," I said at length, in joke.

"Why?" said she quickly, and growing, as I thought, rather pale as she spoke. "Was it studied from nature? I see you have only just finished it: the—the paint is hardly dry, and—would you mind opening the window?—the smell of the oil is a little too strong for me."

My studio window was one of those old-fashioned lumbering contrivances which swing on a pivot. I went behind the chair to comply with her request, and while engaged in arranging a prop to keep the easel-frame in its place, I began to tell her briefly the story of my model's life. I was interrupted by a loud cry of pain, and turned round to find Mrs. Wyllford falling from her chair. I rushed to her assistance, and found that she had already fainted. There was water in the adjoining room, and I hastened to fetch it. As I stepped back I was met by George, who had just come to keep his appointment, and to whom I hastily explained what had happened. Between us we lifted the poor lady up, and laid her on the sofa. In doing this, her head had fallen on my arm, and it was

not until I raised it, that we saw how deadly pale she was. I poured some water between her lips and begged George to get some doctor's help without delay. But he stood like one transfixed, muttering incoherently.

"For goodness' sake," I said, "make haste—no time is to be lost! What is the matter?"

"I think I am going mad," said he as he fell upon his knees beside the couch. "Hark! her head a little more—like my too, like my," he shrieked, in painful accents, "Heaven! how like she is to—Mary—Mary—O God! it is my wife living!"

It was indeed the wife that he had left ten years ago—who had survived his cruel desertion—struggled with poverty and many trials—maintained herself heroically by her own exertions, and was now, thank God! in a position to save him from the misery which his folly and selfishness had occasioned. She had recognised his portrait while I was telling her George Wyllford's story, little thinking how closely it was interwoven with her own, and it was the sudden shock which occasioned her swoon. I have little more to add in explanation. Within twelve months from the date of this event, I married Mary Wyllford. Her father is an altered man. His wife Estime was an ample one, but he never spent a penny of it without her consent. My picture was accepted at the Royal Academy Exhibition, and, wonderful to relate, was well hung. Since then I have painted from hundreds of men, women, and children; but I can safely say that I never heard from any of my sitters, any narrative which has interested me so much as the Model's Story.

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"At last her eye rested on the figure of Leontes: she looked at it long and earnestly."

[See "The Model's Story."



## THE ORDEAL FOR WIVES.

A Story of London Life.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'THE MORALS OF MAYFAIR.'

## CHAPTER XLII.

BY GASLIGHT.

BUT he came to visit her no more. He wrote her a note next morning—which, with all other relics of that time, will, I doubt not, lie upon Esther's breast when she is in her coffin—recapitulating, in a few kind words, the reasons for keeping apart that he had given her the night before; adding, too—was it possible for him to do otherwise?—some expressions of the infinite pain the severance must cost himself. But this was all. He gave no sign of relenting or of change. He came to visit her no more.

She knew then that her dream was definitely over. Of marriage she had long since ceased to think; but love, but tender sympathy, but friendship, but *all* of Paul was riven from her now. She knew this; and she suffered with that triple-fold agony that only very exceptional natures like hers are capable of. She yearned for Paul (does any word but that express the part that the soul plays in human passion?) She brooded over the thought of him day and night and hourly, with a stronger appreciation of his worth and of the fitness there was in herself to be his companion. She sorrowed for him with that purely physical sensation which the great materialist philosopher defined as the irritable condition of certain nerves closely connected alike with the digestive organs and with the brain.

Women of weaker temperament exhaust themselves in one of these forms only—make a religion of their grief, or a sentiment; or, more frequently still, only a source of bodily disease to themselves. Esther Fleming did all three, in her own robust, uncivilized fashion, and (liker to a savage still) she gave no moan under her sufferings. Her

cheeks were white, her sleep no sleep, her meals uncaten; but who was there to notice these things in a person holding such a position as hers? Natty, finding her lessons more negligently attended to, began to have latent suspicions that she had misjudged Miss Fleming; and that, after all, her present governess would turn out just as pleasantly neglectful as all former *bonnes* and nurses had been. Jane, in hourly entanglements of white silk and lace, and hopes of crushing and eclipsing Miss Lynes, would have noticed nothing short of positive illness in anybody unconnected with millinery. And these were the two human souls in London who took the most real interest in Esther Fleming's life.

She felt, at first, that there was a signal injustice in her disappointment making so little change to the world. Every sense and sound of common life jarred on her almost with a rough, actual pain. Miss Dashwood's self-engrossed conversation, the child's merry play, the very sight of the servants at their work, or of the people passing along the streets, was inexpressibly irksome to her.

We would never in youth have the sun to shine upon the faces of our dead. We would have the heartless spirits of the whole world crushed so that they might not mock us in our first, new, overwhelming taste of the reality of sorrow. And the sun shines deep down into the grave where our first-born is to lie before night: and the great world; and, which is bitterer, our own small section of the world gets up, and hopes, and rejoices, just the same upon the day when we learn that we are to stand from henceforth outside all hope and all

rejoicing! Later on in life (when the sun has shone into a great many graves since that little forgotten first one), we turn with a dreary stoicism, or perhaps with truer philosophy, to the thought that others are rejoicing who have once mourned like us; even as we shall one day stand at a marriage-feast while they are occupied in the preparation of their funeral-meats. But Esther was at an age still to hug her grief with passion; to turn from every thought of comfort; to quarrel with the whole universe because it showed no immediate sympathy with Paul and herself.

'You really should try to write in a more lively style,' was Millicent's reply to one of the curt, formal letters she forced herself to write about the house and the servants. 'The doctor says it is very bad for me not to have my spirits constantly amused.'

'I hope you'll get up your colour again soon, Esther,' said Miss Dashwood. 'I have set my heart upon having every one of my bridesmaids handsome, if it's only to make a contrast to Mrs. Peel's.'

'Do play louder, Miss Fleming,' cried Natty. 'I want you to run about on your hands and knees and bark, while I do the man in Punch.'

These are specimens of the kind of sympathy she received.

Sympathy, if she had got it, would have done her no good. Would time? She asked herself this, one gloomy afternoon, as she sat alone, as usual, brooding over her never-dying pain in the silent room where she had heard Paul's voice last. Would time enable her to live down, or live out, her love and her misery together? Ten years hence, when she was thirty, a middle-aged woman, would she come, like Joan, to feel a hard, loveless interest in the common things of life? To rise every morning with no particular hope, and go to rest with no particular disappointment. Oh, if such a time was indeed to come, that she could get over those intermediate years! that she could be old and callous without consciously going through the fearful intervening process of ossification!

She rose, she walked to the window and looked out on the square; dull and dark and silent as it befits a respectable London square to be; and standing there, listening to the patter of the rain upon the pavement, and gazing listlessly at the hurrying forms of the occasional passers-by, a sudden remembrance came across her mind—it was Saturday; a day on which Paul always passed a certain crossing into Oxford street, about two miles distant from the Scotts' house, at five in the afternoon. She knew this fact well; first, from his having explained to her that Saturday was a day on which his visit to her must always be later than usual; secondly, because she had one afternoon chanced to meet him when she was walking along Oxford street, with the child, and he had said, laughingly, 'If ever you want me on a sudden mission of life or death, and it should chance to be Wednesday or Saturday, you would be as certain to meet me at this particular spot at this hour, as you would be of seeing the clock over the post-office, yonder. I have gone this road for more than three years, and never remember being at the crossing more than ten minutes late during that time.'

The remembrance of the fact came suddenly across her mind; and with it a wild, a reasonless impulse to start abroad in the cold and gloom and rain upon the chance of seeing him. Miss Dashwood was out; the child was spending the day with some friends; no one would want her, would miss her, and Paul would be utterly unconscious of her presence. It was scarcely past four now. If she started at once she would be there long before he could by possibility pass; would take shelter in a stationer's shop, which she recollected, and watch him, unseen, as he went by. A dreary comfort, enough; but something—something to stand between her and a certain horrible symptom of whose presence during the last forty-eight hours she had been vaguely conscious in her mind—a dull, leaden incapacity to think or feel or suffer; a loathing of life, an absence of desire even to return to happier things. Better see Paul's

face again, better revivify the old tortures at their worst than give way to this.

She dressed herself, forgetful of the rain, in a light cloak and her usual little thin schoolroom dress, and then started, in a bitter cold wind and with the rain driving sheer in her face, upon her errand. When she got to the end of her walk it was still a quarter to five; and 'as she was ashamed to remain too long with no ostensible object in the shop, she walked up and down until indeed she was thoroughly wet to the skin, for the rain was pouring now, until five minutes to five. Then with that extraordinary sense of guilt of which most of us are susceptible when we are not going to commit anything wrong, she walked into the shop.

The girl behind the counter eyed her sourly as she entered, bringing with her the cold, clinging fog of the street, and desired her, tartly, to observe that there was a stand for umbrellas at the door.

'I am very wet, and I should be glad to have shelter for a few minutes,' Esther stammered, with all the conscious shame of a tongue unversed in artifice. 'And I want a copy-book and some pens, and a bottle of ink—blue ink, if you please.'

Now, the shopwoman knew as well as she knew herself that the girl came into the shop with intentions respecting something or some person unconnected with stationery. Still, a customer is a customer; and London shopkeepers are whole worlds beyond the capacity for curiosity in any matter not directly affecting their own interest. In a country town a woman thus placed must, by a law of her nature, have asked questions: the Londoner, her first disgust at the damp over, just produced the copy-book, pens, and blue ink, and lapsed back into indifference over her embroidery. If the girl had fallen down in a fit, or fallen dead, or stayed five minutes, or an hour, or indeed any time short of the period at which the gas was turned off, she could scarce have brought her mind up to the exertion of thinking of her again.

Five o'clock struck, and then the quarter past five; and then the fog thickened so that it was impossible to discern the features even of the nearest passers-by; and then the sickening thought came upon Esther that Paul must have past without her seeing him, and that all that remained for her was to go home again. She was bodily weak; had scarcely eaten anything all day; and in addition to her disappointment a chill of childish terror overcame her at the thought of having to walk alone through the crowded desolation of the London streets. In all her life she had never so realized that state which the Germans happily term 'God-forsaken' as at this moment. She was too thoroughly beaten for any of the old instincts of pride to come to her help; too bodily miserable, too cold, too wet, too weak, to be conscious of the unreasonableness of her despair. In fact, she had walked a mile or two through the rain to see a certain human face; and had missed seeing it: and now had just to walk home again to a good dinner, and good fire, and every other creature comfort of life. But, in imagination, she had roused herself by strong endeavours into making one more effort at seeing the only thing she desired to live for; and had missed it; and there was nothing more to make her hold on to this wretched mockery of life! And one of the grand characteristics of the disorder of love is that all its greatest tortures, like its greatest enjoyments, are those which the sufferer's own imagination coins. Hence the reason why they are so far worse to bear than those of other passions. For in imagination not the body only, not the mind suffers; but the soul—ourselves! That which one day we can conceive of as enjoying or as suffering in an entirely different state to this unequal partnership in which it is now involved.

Among the beautiful fancies which so many of the old Catholic legends unfold, none is, I think, more beautiful than the well-known image of what shall constitute hell. 'For in this is hell: that, after the dissolution of this earthly body, the soul shall straightway be drawn up-

ward towards God, and shall see Him and feel His presence; and then, when she has tasted to the full the exceeding rapture of love, shall be severed from all love and all light for evermore."

Of such a hell most of us have had some foretaste through the medium of our earthly desires. Esther Fleming experienced its very dregs of bitterness now, when after the short-lived, pictured rapture of seeing Paul, she had got outside the shop door and stood a second irresolute, with the cold wet wind beating cruelly in her face, before she could summon up courage enough to make her way home along the dark, and by this time crowded, pavement.

"Esther!" said a voice close behind her ear, as she stood there shrinking and irresolute. "Child! what, in God's name, brings you here at such an hour?"

Had a ray of warm, delicious light direct from heaven, had the ecstasy of gazing upon an angel's face been suddenly vouchsafed to one of the saints of old, some winter's midnight, in his icy, barren cell, it could scarce have flooded his heart with rapture greater than that which smote Miss Fleming's frozen breast as she heard Paul's voice. From darkness to light, from cold to warmth, from absence, from despair to him! It *was* a sudden break from heaven: I used no metaphor. The nearest approach to a foretaste (or a recollection) of another state than any of us can ever know. And in the instinctive bound of all human hearts in moments of intense human passion like this; in the sudden involuntary rush of thankfulness—we know not to whom!—in the realization, for about twenty seconds, of our own capacity for infinite happiness, is an indirect evidence of God and of the godlike within us, which I really think metaphysicians have too much neglected.

Twenty seconds—Esther's beatitude lasted no longer. Then came reality; burning humiliation that Paul should have seen her; burning shame for the words in which, unless she took refuge in direct

falsehood, she must explain being met in such a position.

"I came out too late," she stammered. "I wanted a copy-book for Natty, and I took shelter here, and I think it got very suddenly dark to-night."

He did not reply by one word; but he took her hand, drew it quietly within his arm, and walked on with her down the street. When they had gone about a dozen yards, he led her under a large projecting portico, which at once formed a protection from the weather, and also, owing to the house being empty and the door unlighted, from the observation of the passers-by.

"Esther, are you aware that it is raining hard?"

"Yes, I know it: I shall soon be home."

"Do you know," laying his hand upon her shoulder, "that you are in a poor, wretched little cloak, and that you are wet through?"

"Not—not quite, I think, sir."

"Do you know," taking her cold, gloveless hand in both of his, "that you are chilled to the very bone, and that if you are not laid up with fever to-morrow it will be no fault of yours?"

"I don't think it would matter much if I was; but I shall not be; I'm not going to be ill."

"Do you know that it is dangerous, that it is wrong, for a girl of your age to wander about alone in the streets of London at such an hour?"

She was silent: but she tried, quite in vain, to take her hand away from him.

"Esther, what did you come out here for to-night?"

No answer.

"Esther, what did you come for? Will you tell me, or will you let me guess?"

She was stonily silent for a minute or two—as was her custom always before the overflow of any strong emotion—then out it came. "I thought I'd see you once more, and I waited and you didn't pass, and I thought I had missed you, Mr. Chester." And then a stifled sob.

There was an ominous silence for two or three minutes; after which



an empty cab happened to drive slowly down the street in their direction, and Mr. Chichester hailed it. 'You had better let me see you home,' he remarked, after he had placed Esther inside; 'it is too late for you to go alone.' And as she neither said yes nor no, he got in beside her, and they drove off.

'Poor, little, cold hands!' said Paul; and he took one of them in his again; 'poor, little, kind, patient face, that would brave cold, and rain, and darkness for my sake!'

And he kissed her.

'Esther,' after a minute or two, 'I have told you, cruel times enough, that I can't marry you. I don't repeat it now, because'—and here Paul's own voice faltered—'because, child, now that I see what kind of materials your love and your character are made of, I scarce know what is honour and what is duty for me. But I swear one thing, from this night forth the choice shall rest with you. I'll not leave you again, never fear that! You shall know all my life, and such as it is my life is yours.'

I don't think all men would take this tone at the precise moment when a woman had compromised herself irrevocably for their sake; but you must remember Paul was not a man of the world, and also that there was a decided taint of eccentricity in the Chichester blood.

'The choice mine? Oh, Mr. Chichester! how can that ever be? I know you can't marry me, and I submit to it. All I wish is that we should remain friends, and that when I go back home you should write to me—once or twice in a month, perhaps, at first.'

'Esther,' drawing her closer to his side, 'do you mean what you say? Would a cold compact of friendship really make you happy?'

'I don't think I spoke of happiness at all, Mr. Chichester. I'm not likely to be very happy while I live.'

'Are you not happy now?'

'Sir, I am frightened! I wish I was at home with Jane.'

He let go her hand; he took his arm from round her instantly. 'You will be home with Jane directly, and you will then, at my request,

go straight to your bed, and try to sleep. With a weaker constitution than yours, such an escapade as the one you have thought fit to engage in to-night might cost a brain fever, but I am not afraid of you. Esther,' after a minute, 'do you consider yourself engaged to me?'

'No, Mr. Chichester; I do not, indeed. I know very well that I am not.'

'I'm not certain of it myself; but we shall both be surer on the point in a few days. Miss Fleming, have I ever told you where I live?'

'You have not. You have put me down, consistently, whenever I have even tried remotely to find out.'

'Then I will tell you now. I live in St. John's Wood—Richmond Cottages;—no, you will never remember all that. I'll give you the written address when the cab stops. Will you come and pay me a visit?'

'Yes, sir.'

'That is right. You put on no conventional affectation, because you know I wouldn't ask you to do a thing that would really harm you. Come, let me see; Sunday—Monday—I can manage to be at home all Tuesday afternoon. Come on Tuesday, between three and four in the afternoon.'

'Yes, Mr. Chichester.'

'And prepare, child'—they were within a hundred yards of the Scotts' house, and somehow her hand was in his again—'prepare for a dark story, for I'm going to tell you mine; prepare for a dark household, for I'm going to introduce you to mine, and also,' for a moment, he hesitated, fearfully agitated, 'to the companion of my life. Esther, good-night.'

He took a letter, containing his address, from his pocket, and gave it her as they stopped at the Scotts' house: he kissed her cold hands three or four times over, and then they parted without another word.

He loved her; his kisses were warm upon her hands, upon her lips; it was to rest with her to be his wife or not. But as Esther stole up unnoticed to her lonely room, the very chill of death itself seemed to be upon her heart.

She knew that if a renunciation was to come from her lips, she would be inflexible, even though the whole of her happiness should be the sacrifice she must offer up. This morning she could have done it, perhaps, in a different spirit; could have said, even as the Hebrew maiden said of old, 'Do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth.' But the first touch of possession had swept over her love now, and unleavened it for ever of the heroic.

Paul had kissed her!

What was duty, what was heroism, if all that remained to her of life—thirty or forty arid years, perhaps—had to be passed away from Paul?

## CHAPTER XLII.

### PAUL'S HOME.

The succeeding days passed by in a kind of dull dream, the nights in a state of feverish excitement, where-in real sleep or coherent reasoning waking were alike denied to her; but still Esther Fleming kept as usual to her duties, and was in no danger of brain fever. On Sunday she struggled with the child as usual through the three first questions of the catechism; on Monday she attended Miss Dashwood through one of her daily courses of millinery; on Tuesday—the day that was to be the black or white day of her life—she even forced herself to sit down and write a letter to David. If things ended as—as her own foreboding told her they *must* end, she would not, she thought, be able to write just at first; and so it would be well now, while she could yet measure her strength, to forewarn them of her return.

'I am well in health,' she stated in this letter, which was quite calm and well expressed, and written in her usual hand, 'but I am doubtful if the life here is one I can live long. Remind Joan that she once said she thought I could earn my livelihood, if I chose it, at Countisbury, and beg of her to be prepared at any time for my return home.'

She was calm when she left the

Scotts' house; calm till she began to feel that she must be close to Paul's; then all her courage forsook her, as women's courage does forsake them, in a second, and with the very inconsistency of cowardice, she stopped the cab suddenly, and dismissed it without even asking the driver how far she was still from her destination.

As chance willed, she was already there. She had scarcely walked a dozen hurried steps when the well-known accents of Paul's voice struck on her ear. In another moment her hand was in his, and she was standing, scarce knowing what she did or said in her agitation, at the threshold of his house.

'I thought you would do something of the kind,' he remarked, after hearing her singularly inconsequential reasons for dismissing the cab. 'I felt sure you would either have lost the address altogether, or forgotten the number, or made some other equally trivial mistake; and so, as a kind of forlorn hope, I stationed myself at the gate to look out for you. I hope you admire my flowers, Miss Fleming? This piece of ground between the house and the area rails, which I dare say you country-people would consider too narrow for a garden-path, is what we Londoners are proud to call a garden. Stay a moment, and I believe I can really find you one or two white violets.'

His voice was very quiet,—too quiet to be thoroughly natural; his face pale, and more worn than she had ever seen it, save on that day when she and the Dashwoods had followed him in his walk. Miss Fleming felt that he was striving to rally, not her nerves alone, but his own, before taking her into the house. And feeling this, she did rally—yes, and was able to stand and talk to him for some minutes, almost in her old unconstrained manner, as he gathered her a few spring-flowers and pointed out, but with somewhat forced spirits, the capabilities which a dozen square feet of London earth might, in a master's hands, afford.

'I don't think you have noticed the plate upon my door yet,' he re-

marked, when the conversation had dropped so suddenly and utterly that there was no longer the barest excuse for remaining outside; 'or, if you have noticed it, you are too well-bred to let me be aware that you have done so. Look here, and confess by how much your interest in me has deteriorated!'

This was what the plate bore.

PAUL CHICHESTER,  
*Teacher of Mathematics.*

'Mr. Chichester, nothing could alter me,' said Esther, very low and very hurriedly. 'As far as this goes, I am not even surprised. I've often thought that you knew something, by experience, of the kind of life that mine is destined to be.'

'I don't think you know what that is, Miss Fleming; but come in—come in at once,' he interrupted himself, quickly. 'We are cowards, both of us; but the inevitable moment can't be staved off any longer, try what we will. Come in: I bid you welcome to my house. You are the first visitor that has ever crossed its threshold since I inhabited it.'

He opened the door, drew her hand within his arm, and led her into a small sitting-room on the ground-floor,—his own especial room, as Esther's instinct told her the moment that she entered it.

'You look pale, Miss Fleming. You have not recovered from your exploits on Saturday. Sit in this easy chair—it's my own, and therefore you may rely upon its being comfortable—and wait patiently while I get you a glass of wine. Pardon me, you *must* take it. For the time being, you are in my power, and must do just what I tell you.'

He took both her hands and made her sit down in the place he had offered; then he helped her to take off her cloak and hat; and then he got her a glass of wine—performing all these offices with that kindly little masculine roughness, so infinitely sweeter to women than are the finished graces of men merely accustomed to society, and versed in the minute science of conventional *petits soins*.

Mrs. Strangways had never once made Paul understand that he was

to put on her opera-cloak, unmasked, during all the time she had had him for an attendant.

'That's better: there's a tinge of colour in your face now. You look a shade more like the healthy young person who stood beside me that first night on the balcony at Weymouth; a shade less like the ghost that flitted suddenly before me in Oxford Street on Saturday. Esther, do you feel strong?'

'Quite strong, now. I was a little tired till you made me take the wine.'

'You're not in the least nervous? You wouldn't give way at anything you had to hear or see?'

'I would not give way a bit. I never do. I haven't been trained to it. My cousin Joan hates scenes. You need not be afraid of me, Mr. Chichester.'

'That is right. Now, answer me one question. Have you ever heard anything about my family-history?'

'Nothing; except that you have separated yourself from your relations for years. You have told me that yourself, you know; I also heard something about it from my Aunt Thalia, before I ever saw you at Weymouth.'

'Very well. Now I am going, in the fewest possible words, to give you the reason of this estrangement. Among other things you have heard, no doubt, that madness, in one form or another, is supposed to be hereditary in our family?'

'Yes, I have heard it.'

'Esther, when I was a child of seven years old, my father died. Not so much, of course, from what I recollect, as from what I have gained from others, I know now that he was a man averse to worldly pursuits; sedate, studious, ambitionless. He was also poor. As he neither cared for society nor for advancement—as he neglected his rich friends, and spent what money he had upon his poor ones—there was, naturally, reason enough for the world in general to call him eccentric—the family malady developing itself under one of its milder forms. My mother especially—the very weakest of God's creatures I ever knew—failed to discover any

of the noble points in Hildebrand Chichester's character. She came of a commonplace family. She was herself (I speak quite coldly, Esther, I outgrew the whole of my love for her) the very type and essence of commonplace, and all the better parts of her husband's nature were simply a sealed book to her. Like all such minds, she was thoroughly fixed in her opinions. Nothing shook her in any idea she had taken up. She neither retrograded nor progressed. My father was eccentric: she had married into a mad family, and must make the best of it. She spoke frequently of the mysterious dealings of Providence, and of the cross she had to bear; and, I suppose, would have been convinced by nothing short of direct revelation that Hildebrand Chichester was a man of great mental, as well as moral strength, who had had the ill-fortune to ally himself with a woman considerably below the dead level of mediocrity in all things.

'I get warm when I speak of my father; and I began by promising you that I would be brief. I must condense more. When I was seven years old, he died suddenly; and, as his income had been derived nearly exclusively from an annuity, his widow and children were left very badly off indeed. Well, Providence, which had before provided my mother with a poor and eccentric husband, stood her in better stead now. She was still a very beautiful woman—I will show you a likeness of her some day; her weeds and her seclusion were neither of them of very long duration; and just one twelvemonth after my father's death, the Honourable Frederick Carew had seen her face sufficiently often in public places to fall in love with her, and offer to make her his wife.

'Esther, though I tell you I outlived my love for her, some of the old pain overcomes me as I have to speak in direct words of my mother's conduct. But the story can't be told otherwise! I was not her only child. A daughter, several years older than myself, was her first-born;—mark this, her *first-born* child. A creature with a fair face

like her own; but from whose innocent lips neither heartlessness nor injustice could ever come. A creature on whom, in our language, God's hand was heavily laid; but who was yet never to know any of that worse bitterness of life which it is the exclusive prerogative of human thought and human intelligence to feel.' Paul stopped abruptly.

'And this child died, Mr. Chichester?' Esther asked, but with trembling lips, for her heart began to divine a ghastly truth;—died, and her mother never mourned for her?

'This child lived. This child lives—I may well say so, for she is, and always will be a child. This child is the companion of my life. Wait, and I will tell you all.

'When my mother entered upon her second engagement, she divined that so heavy a burthen as a helpless, imbecile child would not be an incentive to marriage in the mind of Mr. Carew; divined rightly there, as you will see—and my sister's very existence was studiously ignored before him. I recollect perfectly being trained never to mention Magdalen ('twas my father's favourite name, and he had her called so, little thinking that the hapless child would never know either temptation or repentance while she bore it!)—I recollect being trained never to mention her in Mr. Carew's presence; and I acted my part with the aptitude that I remark most young children show for falsehood, simply as falsehood; and my mother acted hers; and the settlements were drawn out, and the wedding-day was fixed, and they were married!

'I remember that day as clearly as I remember my meeting with you on Saturday. My mother never intended, of course, to attempt to conceal her daughter's existence from Mr. Carew after the marriage. What she wanted was for the marriage to pass over quietly, and then to prepare him by degrees, during their wedding-tour, for the child whom she would have to present to him upon his return. And to carry out this plan she had hired the

small furnished house we lived in for another quarter, and had engaged a woman for the special purpose of taking charge of Magdalen and myself until her return. But the truth was destined to come out somewhat more bluntly than she had calculated on. Mr. Carew was introduced to his step-daughter upon his marriage-day, and through my agency,—thus:

'My mother informed me I was too young to accompany the bridal-party to the church, but promised me that I should appear at the breakfast upon their return—at which honour, I doubt not, I was as proud as children ordinarily are of any opportunity of displaying themselves in new clothes. At all events, I recollect as I stood alone at the dining-room window, waiting for their return, a sudden desire coming across me to exhibit myself in my new finery to Magdalen. I was perfectly aware that, for some cause I did not understand, she was to be kept out of Mr. Carew's sight, and had no intention of disobeying my mother's orders. The gratification of my own vanity was simply what influenced me, and, as this is a passion nearly as strong in some children as in most men, you will understand that I did not reason long, when the intoxicating image of poor Magdalen's surprise had once taken possession of my fancy.

'Esther, the girl was *not* then what in after-years she became. Of sequence, of coherence of ideas she was, I am willing to believe, incapable, although my own recollection don't supply me with evidence on the point. That she was able to join in my play, that she was susceptible of pain and pleasure, I know. I recollect, at this moment, the surprised look of her face when I rushed in upon her in my bridal array, the eagerness with which she fell to examining the different details of my dress—above all, a little knot of white flowers and ribbon, that one of the servants had pinned upon my breast. You know, or you can guess at her love for white flowers (for whom but her should I ever have spent the money that you have known me do?) During the last

few months even that has weakened; but for years the constant possession of fresh white flowers was the solitary desire of her life,—the solitary thing that gave her pleasure. And this has always seemed to me to be connected with some dim recollection of my mother's marriage-day—the *last* day, mind you, on which anything belonging to human affection, or human interest, was her portion.

'If she thought so much of my dress and of one wedding-favour, how must she be impressed by the sight of the grand breakfast-table, and all its profusion of ornaments and flowers, down below? The transition of thought was an easy one; and chance favoured me, by the absence of Magdalen's nurse, in carrying it into execution. You know how time would pass to two young children looking at new and forbidden sweets! Before I thought I had been five minutes in the room, there was a sudden awful sound of footsteps in the passage, a murmur of voices, a rustling of silk, and my mother and her husband stood at the door of the room.

'God forbid that I should attempt, minutely, to describe that scene to you! My mother's weak endeavours to screen herself from the result of her own falsehood, Mr. Carew's coarse rage, the astonishment of the guests, poor Magdalen's stupefied face, as she turned first to one then to another, in the vain endeavour to understand the contention of which she dimly understood herself to be the cause! Every one of these details is imprinted for ever upon my brain, but I need not speak of them to you. The results of that day, the sequel of the story, are all with which I have any concern now.'

"Let her be taken, let her be taken for ever from my sight!" These, or words like these, were what Mr. Carew employed, when, his passion having somewhat cooled, my mother was attempting to reason with him. "I'd as soon live in a mad-house myself as have one of these creatures brought under my roof! The young one," turning with a glance to me, "is bad enough, but him I bargained for. Of the other I will know no

more than I did an hour ago. And you, madam," he added to my mother, "will do wisely in furthering my forgetfulness."

'Well, Esther, from that day I saw Magdalen no more. You know what a child's memories, what a child's affections are! Upon my mother's return from abroad I went to live at Newton. I had the freedom of a country life, the liberty which is the usual portion of unloved, untended children. At the end of a twelvemonth I had my little brother Oliver. What should I think of Magdalen? I was forbidden to speak of her. In time I remembered her only as I remembered London and my father, and all the other things gone for ever out of my life. The scene upon my mother's marriage-day had not been of a nature to make me wish for any renewal of the subject. I knew that Magdalen, for some reason beyond my grasp, was under a ban, and that only some very slight difference between us—my age, perhaps, or my utter insignificance—prevented me from sharing the same fate.

'I don't want to use any hard words. Mr. Carew and my mother acted, doubtless, according to the light that was in them. He was not the only man in the world who would have repudiated the forced duty of taking under his charge an alien, imbecile child. There have been numberless instances of women feeling not alone want of affection, but actual repugnance for their own offspring. As regards myself, I have no cause of complaint against the Carews. My stepfather looked upon me from first to last with complete aversion; but the old Lord Feltham took somewhat of a liking to me—half, I think, out of spite to my stepfather, whom he despised, and was wont to call half-witted—and on his death-bed made his only son promise to assist my mother in my education and start in the world.

'And this Francis Carew, afterwards the late Lord Feltham, did. He was a man of as small a brain, of views as narrow, as his cousin—looking with the same righteous horror upon the hereditary curse of

the Chichesters, and pronouncing as just the sentence of banishment that had been passed upon my unhappy sister. Personally, too, I believe he disliked me: he had no children of his own, and the subject and the sight of children alike irritated him: but he had a strong idea (much stronger than had my stepfather whose passions were too strong for him to be cautious) of keeping all family disgrace, foremost amongst which he classed poverty, out of sight of the world. His cousin Frederick had been fool enough to marry a widow without money and with children. One of these children, an idiot, they had wisely shut away for life; the other, not an idiot, couldn't be so easily disposed of. Then he must be educated. The future Lord Feltham's brother must be in the position of a gentleman. The boy must be educated: and educated I was. I went to Harrow, I went to college, and on my twentieth birthday was informed by Lord Feltham that he was about to obtain for me a commission in the army.'

'And then you broke with them all, Mr. Chichester? This is the part of the story I have already heard.'

'Then I broke with them, Esther. You are right. Then I broke with them! On my twentieth birthday, after tendering my thanks to Lord Feltham and my stepfather for the assistance they had given my mother in my education, I inquired, in the midst of a full family conclave, for my sister, Magdalen.

'My mother cast her eyes towards heaven and searched for her handkerchief, Lord Feltham and my stepfather put the question curtly aside. So I repeated it. Up to that time I had been treated as a boy, I remarked, on the subject of my sister. Now that I was a boy no longer I wished to hear where she was living, as I intended to go and see her.'

'Do you remember the day I married your mother, sir?' cried out Mr. Carew, whitening with rage. 'Because, if you do, I wonder at your daring to allude to this subject in my presence.'

'I answered that I remembered it



accurately—as indeed I did—and I also added that I felt shame when I counted up the number of years that had since elapsed without Magdalen's face having been seen among us.' Then he added—

'No, Esther. I will not go into it all to you. Why, in truth, should I? I am not seeking to shock you with accounts of the cold inhumanity of those narrow hearts and brains, but simply to show in what especial manner Magdalen came to fall into my hands.

'When our conversation was ended, Lord Feltham gave me my unhappy sister's address, with fullest warning that unless I left my family disgrace to moulder where it was, I was to look for no more assistance from his hands, and that evening I bade my mother farewell and left Newton.

'“You are mad, Paul,” were her last words to me. “After all Lord Feltham's kindness and my prayers you are going to turn out just as senseless and headstrong as your poor, dear father. Magdalen is perfectly well cared for where she is. What good can it do either you or herself to disturb her?”

'I replied that I would judge for myself, and I did so. Yes, Esther, I did so! Before noon of the next day I held my sister in my arms.

'But, great God, how changed! My childish remembrance was of a soft-faced, soft-voiced girl, who used to laugh and join with me in my play, and whose vacancy of intellect was at least not glaring enough to show itself to me—I saw a wan, faded woman; with less, far less than a child's intellect, but with an unspeakable, unmistakable look of the pain that ought only to belong to us, who think and know what life is, upon her vacant face. I remembered a girl who used to kiss me and soothe me, in her poor way, in all my childish sorrows; I found a woman in whose bereft heart all capacity for, all knowledge even of human affection, was for ever withered and dead. What she might have been, I can never know. I have refrained long from even speculating on that point. What she was as a child I know, what I found her I

know. And at the time I rested simply upon that knowledge—and acted on it.

'She had lived with the people, an honest enough country labourer and his wife, in whose hands I found her, nearly four years, they informed me. They didn't know her name, nor yet where his lordship had had her kept before. There was no particular change in her state during this time, only perhaps she noticed less. Her health was pretty good, considering she lived quite in two rooms, and never took the air. They weren't accustomed to mad people, and wouldn't be sorry to give her up now that the children were growing older. Lord Feltham had put it in their way because a brother of the man, or of the woman, I forget these kind of details, had been his father's valet.

'You look white, child. The story is a sickening one, but 'tis nearly told. The moment I saw my sister Magdalen's face, my determination was formed. All I had to do was to find out the money obligations under which I stood, as regarded her, to Lord Feltham and Mr. Carew. In answer to my inquiries on the subject I was referred to the family solicitor, and from him I learned that Magdalen Chichester had been supported, strictly, through and upon her own means. With the strange foresight of parental love, my father had appointed in his will that, should my mother marry again, the sum of fifty pounds a year was to be applied under my mother's guardianship, for her use; and in the event of this second marriage, it was further appointed that upon my attaining the age of twenty-one I was to become my “afflicted sister Magdalen's sole guardian for the remainder of her life.” The rest of his money, scarcely amounting to a hundred pounds a year more, was left to my mother, and this Mrs. Carew now enjoys, and, I doubt not, will enjoy for another quarter of a century, at least, as pin-money. On her death, I believe, it is to come to me.

'I became her guardian, Esther, as I am now and ever shall be. It was no fine or exalted sentiment whatever that made me act as I did.

Any man possessed of common human passions or human affections must have done the same. Upon one side, the bounty of people whom I despised and the cold-blooded renunciation of one of the nearest and strongest ties of life—upon the other, work and poverty, certainly, but independence, and the power to stand by the poor, bereft being who had no friend on earth but myself. Lad as I was, and accustomed till then to defer wholly to the will and opinion of others, it never even occurred to me to doubt as to what my line of conduct must be. Accident decided by what means my bread and Magdalen's should be earned. The brother of one of my college-friends required a travelling tutor for six months. I accompanied him, leaving Magdalen in good hands during the interval, found that I had somewhat of a speciality for tuition, and on my return—I was just one-and-twenty then—succeeded in obtaining a mathematical mastership to a private school near Kensington.

'Those were uphill days, Esther, as you may believe. But, although my abilities are not more than those of other men, I had an indomitable determination in me to succeed that would, I believe, have moved mountains. Nothing daunted me; nothing disappointed me; I had Magdalen's pale face to strengthen me. I had the thought of the Carews to goad me on to fresh endeavours. I have succeeded. During the last six years not one farthing of the interest of my sister's money has been touched. I have even yearly added something to the capital. If I died to-morrow, Magdalen, with the money sunk as I intend to sink it for her, would have enough to live in the comfort and the care that her state demands, and will demand more every year that she lives. Yes, thank God! I have succeeded. And, looking back to these nine years of work, I don't think I can say my life—save for her, poor soul—has been an unhappy one. More than this, Esther, these years of work have had the strongest influence for good upon my own mental growth. . . .

' . . . Why should I turn with

shame from that blot upon my 'scutcheon, which is in truth no blot. I shouldn't, child, save for something in your eyes which pleads to me not to speak of it. I am by nature wholly of the temperament of my father and his people—the same capacity for passionate, reasonless emotion, the same innate distaste for action, the same fitful humour, the same tendency to profoundest, moody melancholy. How can I tell what I might have become in the life of mental inactivity which the army would have opened to me? As it is, from the time I was twenty my life has been one of never-ceasing, healthy work. My brain has been habitually submitted to the mechanical processes of reason until I have got to hold it, so to speak, in my own command. We contain, each of us, you know, within ourselves the antagonistic powers which may with special training counterbalance almost any so-called irresistible or hereditary tendency of the bodily organism. So finely balanced is the machine, that a grain may turn it to either side; but I have always maintained, and will always maintain, that as long as disease has not actually changed the structure of the organ and so destroyed the possibility of reasoning, it is in the power of the will to cast that grain. To the man whom birth has placed in that awful border-land between sanity and insanity, and who once becomes a slave to his lower nature, any of the commonest shocks of life, any disappointed hope, any delusion of the senses, may be fatal. The man with the same birthright, but whose brain during the progress from youth to maturity has been made flexible and habitually obedient to the dictates of the rational will, may suffer—will suffer—more keenly than other men while he lives; but he will not be mad. The entail to the darkest of all human heritages is cut off in him, cut off—I speak it reverently—by his own diligent cultivation of such poor materials as were granted to him.

' Esther, the story is told. Wait a minute or two, and I will bring Magdalen to see you.'

## CHAPTER XLIII.

## MAGDALEN.

This, then, was Paul's secret. No ill-assorted marriage, no fidelity to a passion that his heart had long outlived, was the barrier that stood between him and a new love; but simply a very plain, very commonplace duty—the care of a forlorn and imbecile sister, whom not so much an irresistible duty but the wanton neglect of her first natural protector had cast upon his hands.

One of the strange inconsistencies of human nature is its unwillingness to accept any other blow than that particular one for which it stood prepared. For a wholly different, for, in one sense, a far more difficult position than this, Esther Fleming was armed, and would, doubtless, have fought the fight out well. But her heart had contracted with the sharp pangs of cruellest disappointment during all the latter part of Paul's history; and, when he prepared to leave her, no one word, either of surprise or consolation, found its way to her lips.

What, indeed, was she to say? Severed from him by such a rival as she had dreamed of, all the pride, all the nobleness of her heart must have cried out, 'Keep to her. Cherish to the last the life that has been bereft of all else for your sake!' This she knew she could have said; could have thanked him for the confidence he had given her; have promised to remember him with affection while she lived, and then have gone away—gone far away, home to the old house at Countisbury, to drink alone and in silence the dregs of the bitter cup her life had proved to her.

But what was she to say now? Full of youth and the passion of youth, was she to cry, 'For this phantom, for this ghost of a duty that others could fulfil as well, give up your life and all that my love could make your life to you? Love, youth, hope, what are they, compared to the straight and narrow path wherein you have decided it is your duty to keep?' This, of course, was what Paul would expect from her; this, of course, was the renun-

ciation that to a lukewarm love like his would be so simple. For her it was worse than death; it was bitterness that even the last few weeks had not prepared her for. And pride and reason alike told her that she *must* speak thus. He had said that the issue was to be left in her hands. What remained for her than to corroborate the fiat that he himself had already tacitly pronounced, by telling her his history?

No thought of Paul's self-sacrificed life; no thought of all the loveless years of his youth; no respect for the very highest qualities it had ever been given her to know in any man, rose in Esther's mind during these first few minutes. She was capable of it all hereafter; but now she was simply a woman, smarting under the severest stroke a woman's vanity can sustain—the belief, namely, that she has given passionate love in exchange for calm, tempered, reasoning friendship. And so, as she walked to the window, through which the soft sun of the spring afternoon was streaming, and as she smelt the sweetness of the spring flowers from Paul's tiny garden outside, she realised (many human beings, I fancy, have done the same) that love was a madness; that it had brought her no one experience save misery since she had known it; and that she could pray—yes, that she could sincerely pray—God to set her free from it and from all influence of Paul from this very hour.

I don't know whether she actually began the petition or not; for, just as her thoughts reached this point, the door of the sitting-room opened and Paul came in—Paul and his sister.

At the sight of her—at the sight of that poor face, so like Paul's in outline, so removed from his by the whole world of soul and brain—Esther's heart sickened and stood still. A minute before, outraged pride, wounded love, had been paramount in her breast; but at the first sight of her unhappy rival all petty, all selfish feeling was swept away for ever. She stood literally hushed, speechless, motionless, as she gazed on the face of Magdalen

Chichester. Just as one full of life and health might stand hushed, if led abruptly from the outside, noisy world into a silent chamber of death.

Was it not death, indeed? death far more fearful than all mere bodily mortality? There was nothing in the slightest degree repulsive in the appearance of Paul's sister. In repose, and with the expressionless eyes downcast, a sculptor might have taken her chiselled features still as a model for the wan, passive, patient face of some mediæval saint. What chilled you so inexpressibly when you first saw her was the quenched look, the utter want of every human expression, the expression of suffering, even, upon her face. Earlier in life, when the weak brain had possessed somewhat more of vitality, she had possibly been able to suffer more; for hers was conspicuously one of the cases in which, year by year, and while the bodily health may improve, the one ray of intellect seems to flicker more and more feebly. But all that was over now; and severance from Paul would just have cost her no more, not so much perhaps, as severance from her nurse or from her accustomed room. She took her meals; she walked out in the sun; she went to her rest when they bid her; she got up when they bid her; but all passively, without even the slight irritability of temper which, some years before, she had been used to show. Upon all God's earth no being could live in whom not intelligence alone, but all the ordinary physical senses of our nature were more utterly void and blank than in the bereft companion of Paul Chichester's life.

'Give her your flowers,' he whispered, coming closer to Esther. 'A flower is the only thing that will rouse her attention, and even for them, I think, she has well-nigh ceased to care. What! would you draw back?' he added, as Esther faltered visibly. 'Can there be anything in *her* of which you should stand in dread? Let me have them, then, and I will give them to her.'

'No, Mr. Chichester,' and Esther's voice was perfectly calm; 'I would

rather give her them myself. Will you have my flowers, please? Your brother has just picked them fresh from the garden.' And she walked a step or two forward; she took Paul's flowers from her breast—what right had she to them, to anything of his?—and held them out to his sister.

She just raised her eyes to Esther's face, took the flowers passively, and then stood, as a child stands in the presence of strangers, waiting to be bid to move or to speak.

'Magdalen will go back to Susan,' said Paul, coming back tenderly to her side; 'and Susan will take her out in the sunshine. Will Magdalen give her hand to Miss Fleming?'

She looked at him as she had looked at Esther, without speaking a word; then held out her hand, letting the flowers fall unheeded to the ground as she did so. Esther Fleming took it—took that nerveless, unoffending hand which yet, as she believed, had cut in twain the one golden cord of her life, held it reverently in both of hers, and kissed it.

'And I love you better than I thought I *could* love any woman,' said Paul, when he came back a few minutes later and found her, pride gone, harshness gone, self, altogether, gone, meekly restoring his flowers again to their place. 'Esther, let me kiss you—thus—thus—for that kiss you gave her—the only kiss, God help her! that any lips, save mine, have given her since she was a child. You are worthy of a better fate, my poor Esther; but, as heaven has willed it, so it must be.'

'Paul, you shall never leave her!' but she threw her arms round his neck as she said it. 'I will love you always; but I will never come, by one inch, between you and your duty to her.'

#### CHAPTER XLIV.

##### ALONE.

It is not invariably the case that young women in a state of advanced civilization love men more the better

they think of them; rather the reverse, I imagine. But Esther did not belong to a highly-civilized type. The Dashwoods' views of men, and of what men must be, had never really touched her. She held still to a lofty ideal. She believed as rigidly in honesty and truth as she did in the old-fashioned Christian religion that Joan had taught her; and the only times when her love for Paul had been ever shaken was when occasionally somewhat lax notions respecting traditional articles of her faith had fallen from his lips.

But now she saw him, for the first time, as he was. She was brought face to face not with any ideal at all, but with Paul Chichester the living man, and her love was heightened immeasurably. In nineteen cases out of twenty—or probably that estimate is altogether false; in ninety-nine out of a hundred—the hour in which two people in love first see each other in their true character, is the hour in which 'both perceive they have dreamed a dream' and awake from it. But Esther's imagination—rare accident!—had built up an ideal very near to what Paul really was; and she knew now that her instinct had been correct, that he was cast in that mould wherein the man *must* be cast whom she was to love for life—the most perfectly heroic, the Christian mould, namely. (I endorse nothing, reader; I am but the recorder of my heroine's opinions.) If Paul had at times seemed to waver where she was sure, had not his whole life been an actual working interpretation of her religion—of the highest, of the only true light by which she believed it is given to men to walk? Could there be a more Christian conception of duty than to accept unconditionally such a life as his had been? Could any faith be greater than his belief that his bitter lot had been simply the one best suited to him; not the mere result of blind and cruel chance, but the mysterious workings of a will whose perfect love and wisdom it never even occurred to him to question? Could any virtue be nobler than the life-long fidelity with which he had

stood to his self-imposed yoke—courageous and unshrinking, yet humble as a child as to the merit of his own abnegation?

She had loved Paul long; almost from the first hour she ever saw him. She had loved him passionately, instinctively; with that wild craving of the whole heart and brain which, while it can find no reason to offer for its excess, holds in its own nature the very core and essence of all true love—perfect and unknowing sympathy. But now she found an outward and visible form of the superiority she had hitherto only yearned after, in her idol. She saw him crowned with the fairest ornament, the divinest beauty that can ever encompass a human soul. She saw him suffering, resigned, brave; and from loving, by an easy transition, she fell to worshipping him.

The first grand dogma of all primitive human religion is sacrifice, and Esther was essentially primitive and essentially human. As soon as she worshipped Mr. Chichester she felt (she had not done so before the day she worshipped him, mind), with all the glow of fresh enthusiasm, that her life could no longer be the colourless, loveless life she had pictured, but a life well spent, because utterly sacrificed to her idol.

A letter from David Engleheart the morning after she had been to visit Paul, held out, as it seemed to her, immediate counsel and aid in the position in which she now stood. At another time she must have laughed—have laughed, and then have wept, over the minglement of the grotesque and the really sad in poor David's letter. But with the sublime selfishness of love, all the significance his letter bore for her now was simply in as far as its contents could affect her relations with Paul.

'Come to us any day,' the poor fellow wrote. 'Your little room is in order, and only waiting to receive you. And, Esther, don't be surprised, but when you come—if you are not here in the next fortnight—Joan will have married me! When I got your letter, my dear—

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you mustn't be offended with me if I was wrong—the thought struck me that you weren't happy in your new life, and I told Joan so, and proposed she should send for you back at once. Well—I could laugh, child, I could put down my pen and laugh, though, God knows! it is no jesting matter—she flew back straight to the old subject (and after dropping it, and almost letting me feel myself quiet and comfortable for weeks past). If you were to come back to Countisbury, your home must be made a permanent home for you; and if Aunt Engleheart died—good Lord! why do I go through all the dreary farce again? We've been asked in church, Esther! been asked in church, and after the third time of asking, I belong to Joan Engleheart, and shall walk to the parish church and be married to her at any moment she chooses. Don't congratulate, or console, or anything, please, when you write, but just say what day you'll come, and Patty and I will be there to meet you at the bridge. And Esther, my dear, don't pity me, even in your heart. I'd marry fifty Joans to get you to live with me; and considering the poor kind of fellow I am, and all the good she's been to me, and how she looks after my money and everything, I believe I'm making only a right return by taking her for my—no, I mean by letting her take me for her husband. Her plan for you is—I don't like it, though, and don't think it necessary—that you and she together should organize a little day-school for the better kind of children hereabouts. Farmer Villicot would send you five at once, and the promise of a continued supply for another dozen years, and John Williams would send two, and altogether Joan thinks you would start with ten or twelve at least. Heaven knows, a school is sorely wanted for the young savages, but I don't like to think of Esther Fleming engaged on such a task.

But Esther Fleming did like to think of herself as so engaged; and as she walked about and discharged her duties in the days succeeding her visit to Paul, her cheeks were flushed, her step was elastic, her

eyes were full of light. Of course you are right; it wouldn't have lasted; no enthusiasm lasts; but it was quite genuine for the time, and, as must ever be the case with all genuine emotion, Esther believed firmly herself in the eternity of its duration.

'You shall have one week to decide,' were Paul's last words when he had walked home with her on Tuesday. 'For one week I shall neither see you nor write to you; then, this day week, at this hour, I shall come and hear, and abide by your decision. Only, before you give it, I shall tell you honestly whatever effect these intervening days may have worked on myself.'

And, as I have said, during these days she walked erect, and performed her duties bravely, and only cried by nights, and believed quite sincerely that she was strong enough to part from Paul and live all the remainder of her life away from him without a murmur.

'Whatever it may be hereafter (if there is any hereafter), I don't believe in good people being rewarded in this world,' said Miss Dashwood, suddenly, as they were sitting together before the fire on the last night of Esther's probation. 'Out of all the half-dozen people I know intimately, you are, beyond question, the best, and you are ending in grief, and all the rest of us well, or what we are willing to consider as well. Arthur marries Miss Lynes; I, Lord Feltham; Milly has an excellent income, a man she finds it possible to live with, and now this week-old son, whom, no doubt, as being part of herself, she'll love. Even Mrs. Strangways prospers. I heard to-day that her husband has been appointed to an excellent official post in Russia, and that she's going to take all her dear children with her, and devote herself to their education, and think nothing of the world. In other words, if the Russians think her too old to dance, she'll go in for domesticity, flavoured by quiet home flirtations, till the eldest girl is sixteen, and then return to the world, and flirt and manoeuvre vicariously. Yes, this is how all we of the world prosper, and you,

Esther, who would outweigh us all put together in the balance of moral good—if such an unpleasant machine existed, which it happily does not—you are going to wear yourself out teaching children in Devonshire, and giving up your life to a man who gives you up for a Quixotic sense of duty. Of a truth, virtue doesn't pay, and I find it better to be vicious!

'I don't think anything pays,' said Miss Fleming, meekly. 'Love certainly does not, and pleasure, you say, does not; of riches I have had no experience. If nothing brings reward in this world, as well try duty, which, at least, may advance us in the next.'

'I like to hear good people say those things,' cried Miss Dashwood, with the hard, short laugh that was daily growing common with her; 'it brings them so completely to our own level after all. Self, self! Self-advancement, in this world or the next, is the one thing we live for, good or bad, fast or slow. Esther, breaking off, and her voice changing in a second, 'I hope you'll think of me sometimes?'

'I shall think of you, Jane. I shall have little to hinder me from thinking of old friends.'

'I fancy, you know, I should have been different if I'd married Arthur. If ever you marry Paul—don't interrupt me; his sister might die; there's at least a bare possibility of it—if ever you marry Paul, and you find that being the wife of a man one loves passionately is happiness, think of me, Esther, and of what I ought to have been! I shall never be sentimental again like this while I live,' added Miss Dashwood, huskily. 'In speaking this once to you, I'm saying good-bye to all the old life, and to whatever of good there was in me. I shall try not to make Lord Feltham miserable. I shall try to respect him, the more so because you once liked him' (for with rare delicacy, with fine intuitive generosity, Esther had had the courage to tell the whole truth to Jane, and, in telling it, to make Oliver's character shine). 'I shall do my duty, and in time I shall come, no doubt, to take a pleasure

in my diamonds! But, Esther,' she came close, and laid her cold, little hand upon her friend's, 'there *was* something capable of better things in me. When I laughed at the idea of goodness just now, and called love and goodness as selfish as—doing what I'm going to do! I didn't mean it. Poverty and work, and self-sacrifice and all, Esther, you're better off than I am—Paul loves you!'

On the afternoon of the next day, Esther Fleming stood, at the appointed hour, by the window of Mr. Scotts' drawing-room, and waited for Paul Chichester's coming. The smell from the lilacs in the square brought Countisbury vividly before her. She could see herself in the house-place, going through her monotonous daily tasks; could see herself in the long summer evenings, a saddened woman, walking slowly up and down the terrace, where, two years ago, a girl—herself—used to walk with elastic step and a heart full of buoyancy and trust in the future; could imagine how a very few more years would bring her quite close to Joan and David; and how one or two faded letters, and the old Vandyke upon her wall, alone would remind her with a start, at times, that she too had once been young; that hope, that love, had once been in her very hands; and that love and hope had just passed away, silently but irrevocably, out of her life, as her youth had done.

'Esther, you never heard me come up. Miss Dashwood was going out as I reached the house, and gave me leave to enter. Let me look at you, child. So! It is good to see your face again.' And Paul took her in his arms.

For a minute she let him hold her so; for a minute she could not remember one of the sentences—the well-turned, admirable sentences—in which she had resolved to pronounce her own death-warrant. And Paul profited by her silence so far as to hold both her hands in his, and read steadily all the suffering and all the resolve of that downcast, pallid face.

'Esther, let me speak first,' he said,

when his survey was completed. 'It will be best so.'

'No, Mr. Chichester, no,' and she drew her hands away resolutely; 'I don't want strengthening by anything that you can have to say. I have thought it all out; I know exactly what I must do.'

And then she told him, but not at all in well-turned sentences, how she meant to abide by her first resolution, and what her plans were for the remainder of her life.

'And you don't intend to marry me? That seems wholly to have past out of your mind.'

'No, sir, I don't mean to marry you. You know you told me as we walked home that you would never bring a wife under the same roof with your sister. You are right in that, and it is also right that while you live your sister should not be put away from under your roof. These things simply are so; I choose the one path there is for me to walk in.'

For a moment Paul was silent; as a man may well be who stands looking back, for the last time, upon the home, however dreary, however loveless, which yet has been his home for years; then he spoke, and his voice never faltered, never changed again.

'Esther, during the last week I have thought as much, probably I have reasoned more, than you, and I have come to a wholly different conclusion. To what I said when I saw you last, I hold still. A young fresh life, children's fresh faces, couldn't grow up under the same roof with Magdalen.'

'Never—never!' she clasped her cold hands passionately. 'You needn't repeat a word; I know it all.'

'You should never be brought under the same roof with her, and I know you too well to think that you would ever propose that she and I should be parted. I was wrong in saying the decision must come at all from you; the decision is for me. Esther, if my sister was now as she was even some years ago, I would not hesitate. If she knew me to the extent of missing me, or of looking for my coming, I would not

part from her—that I say and know to be truth. As long as her heart held to me by the very frailest thread, she should have had no rival; but the time is past, long and for ever past, when she was sensible of affection even for her own personal attendant. Do you remember meeting me one winter's morning near Dr. Wilmot's house at Bath? Did she not remember it? did she not remember the lone, red house standing out, dark and desolate, against the winter sky! 'Well, at that time my sister was living under his care. I had heard of his great ability in her class of disorders, and contrived—I need hardly say at what a sacrifice—to get her under his care. When she left him he pronounced his verdict upon her state, an utterly hopeless verdict, I do not need to tell you. At the same time he made me an offer, should I desire it at any future time, to take her entirely into his charge.'

'Esther, I know that she will be better with him than with me, and with him I have placed her. I'm not a man who takes long to decide in these things. I felt it my duty to take her away from the Carews and work for her, and I did it. You have awakened me now to an altogether new sense of life; you have made me feel that I owe more to myself than I can possibly owe even to the very nearest human tie I have. I have done the task I set myself, Magdalen is well provided for life, and I am free—free to live, to breathe the healthy, common air of daily life, and have the cares and joys of other men. Will you do more than you have already done? Having brought me back to desire life, will you make my life indeed worth holding? Will you spend it with me?'

She said not a word; only instinctively she held her hand out—instinctively she moved a step nearer to his side.

'Your answer involves no question of Magdalen, mind. Four days ago I took her to Dr. Wilmot's charge; if you refused to marry me I should still leave her there, and carry out the plan I have formed.

My plan is this—and it is not new, three years ago, when my sister was very ill, and the probability of my being left alone was forced upon me, I resolved upon it—I shall go to Australia.'

'Paul!'

'Why do you look so miserable, child?'

'I could never bear you to go; 'tis the very end of the world!'

'But the end best suited for a man like me. I have two friends, school-fellows of mine in Australia; one in the city of Adelaide, the other on a sheep-farm two or three hundred miles off; I shall go straight to Adelaide. My friend edits one of the first daily papers there, and will put me on his staff immediately I arrive. If I get on in town I shall lead a town life; if not—but I don't fear—I will invest the very little money that I possess in the world in a sheep-walk. No looks of yours would change my intentions, my little Esther! I've had enough of the old world. With my new desire of life has come a craving for a new field, for thoroughly fresh employment. The question is, will you come with me? You are not unsuited for a colonial life.'

'I can sew, and I can bake, and indeed do all about a house, sir. The thing is—'

'Go on, please.'

'Do you really want me? I don't know'—here she blushed furiously; 'but I feel as if it was all my doing. I mean that, through me, in some way, your life has changed, and now you think all you can do is—to take me with you! Mr. Chichester, I shall be an expense! You will be better alone.'

'Possibly. A wife is an encumbrance; and then I shall have my friend's fire-side to go to, his children to sit upon my knees. Will you write to me sometimes, Miss Fleming?'

She looked at him; and he took her to his breast and kissed her.

'You are making a miserable

marriage,' Paul remarked, after a long silence. 'Milly has married well, and in another month Jane will have married well. They will both of them have as many friends as they choose to pay for possessing, and you—yes, I mean to take you at once; you will not be Lady Feltham's bridesmaid, you will be on your voyage to Australia, poor, friendless, and alone.'

'Alone?' but the thought made her come closer to his side. 'Alone? Oh Paul, I shall be with you!'

#### MORAL.

Reader, if you are a man of fortune and desire the assistance of a young woman in getting rid of that fortune for you; if your heart yearns after a companion who shall dress extravagantly, who shall sit with credit at the head of your table, who shall make your house generally attractive to your friends,—do as Marmaduke Scott, and as Lord Feltham did. You need not be at the trouble of travelling to find what you require. London, Paris, Bath, Brighton, Cheltenham; wherever you may be, you will find the material ready to your hand.

Reader, if you are a man of education but no money, and are so inconceivably single-minded as to wish to possess a woman who shall be bound to you for life; if you have visions (God knows how, in this generation, they come into your head!) of a wife who shall work with and for you, cook your meat and mend your shirts, be your housekeeper and the mother of your children, and your own intellectual companion, and truest, tenderest friend—go and search for your ideal among the Devonshire Moors! You won't get her in large cities out of the classes from whom men take their wives.

And, unfortunately, the Devonshire Moors are every day becoming more enclosed.

THE END.

## NOTES ON AN OLD LOVE STORY.

'C'est l'amour, l'amour, l'amour,  
Qui mène le monde à la ronde.'

SO airily does the popular song exhibit the erotic creed of the light-hearted youth of la belle France. We wonder if the young and ardent Picard, M. Blouse Bleue—who with a happy equanimity is accustomed to think little of the conflagration of his house if only he has been provident enough to make sure that the key is in his pocket—as he trills the refrain upon, behind, or alongside the eternal white horse of his native province, ever thought that he had borrowed his philosophy from the easy-going system of Epicurus, as rendered in Roman numbers by the poet-martyr, Lucretius. In two lines—allowing for repetition, indeed, in one line and a quarter—the peasant gives the pith of the first twenty of the invocation to

'Æneadam genitrix, hominum divumque voluptas  
Alma Venus,'

whom the poet, with a logic warped by the same fallacy as that which, long ages afterwards, befooled the hot, chivalrous Lord Herbert of Cherbury, calls upon to be the divine patroness of a work which was to demonstrate to the world the grand and exhilarating fact of divine remoteness and *insouciance*. The painful John Mason Good thus does into the vernacular of the greater part of these islands, the lines referred to:—

'Parent of Rome! by gods and men beloved,  
Benignant Venus! thou, the sail-clad main  
And fruitful earth, as round the seasons roll,  
With life who swellest, for by thee all live,  
And, living, hail the cheerful light of day:  
Thee, goddess, at thy glad approach, the winds,  
The tempests fly: dedalian Earth to thee  
Pours forth her sweetest flow'rets: Ocean  
Laughs,  
And the blue heavens in cloudless splendour  
decked:  
For when the Spring first opens her frolic eye,  
And genial sephyræ, long locked up, respire,  
Thee, goddess, thee the aerial birds confess,  
To rapture stung through every shivering  
plume:  
Thee, the wild herds, hence, o'er the joyous  
glebe  
Bounding at large, or, with undaunted chest,  
Stemming the torrent tides. Through all that  
lives,  
So, by thy charms, thy blandishments o'er-  
powered,  
Springs the warm wish thy footsteps to pursue,

Till, through the seas, the mountains, and the  
floods,  
The verdant meads, and woodland filled with  
noise,  
Spurred by desire, each palpitating tribe  
Hastes, at thy shrine, to plant the future race.'

What Lucian, or Cicero, or Fontenelle, or De Foe, or Savage Landor will discover, for an expectant posterity, the emendations which the tuneless Carus—alas, palpably too dear!—would suggest, if he could accomplish them, with the twilight of Hades shed upon them, after the action of that pluilier which first charmed away at intervals his reason, and then in the long-run urged him, like a springbok driven over a precipice, himself to horse the chariot in which he was to be transported into the Silent Land? Oh! thou departed utterer of the thing which is not, if thy cavalier doxology to Venus, and especially the lines we have emphasized by italics, be not as great a 'hum' as the 'gentle spring' and the 'ethereal mildness' of Jemmy Thomson—perhaps better known to thee by his more classical and antique cognomen of *Sophonisba*—what on earth—or, to probe thy feelings more acutely, what under the earth—is the meaning of all those touching stories of woe-begone lovers of which thou wert at once so cognisant and so cruelly forgetful? Where are the loves of 'infelix Dido,' and 'pious Æneas'? Where are the loves of Sappho, the tenth Muse, and the boatman Phaon, beautiful and inconstant? Have the loves of Hero and Leander delivered them from going down to the abysses where erst the foundered Helle entered? Verily thou and thy 'Graius homo,' Epicurus, might, in your own day be men, but wisdom did not die with you. We moderns know a thing or two, thanks to a *par nobile*, with whom, as they left this world with other aspirations and hopes than yours, it is possible you have not forgotten, and whom we shall decline on this occasion to introduce to you. Every Englishman—with bows to Victor Hugo, and in a spirit of calmly proud appropriation with which the brilliant Frenchman who has broken in the 'hop, skip, and jump' of our childhood to the paces of criticism, can have nothing to do—





NOTES ON AN OLD LOVE STORY.

"Roused from his dream beneath the wave  
I have holy kisses the god embraced—  
A god himself that gave!"

[Written by Carl Flory.]

[See the Text.]



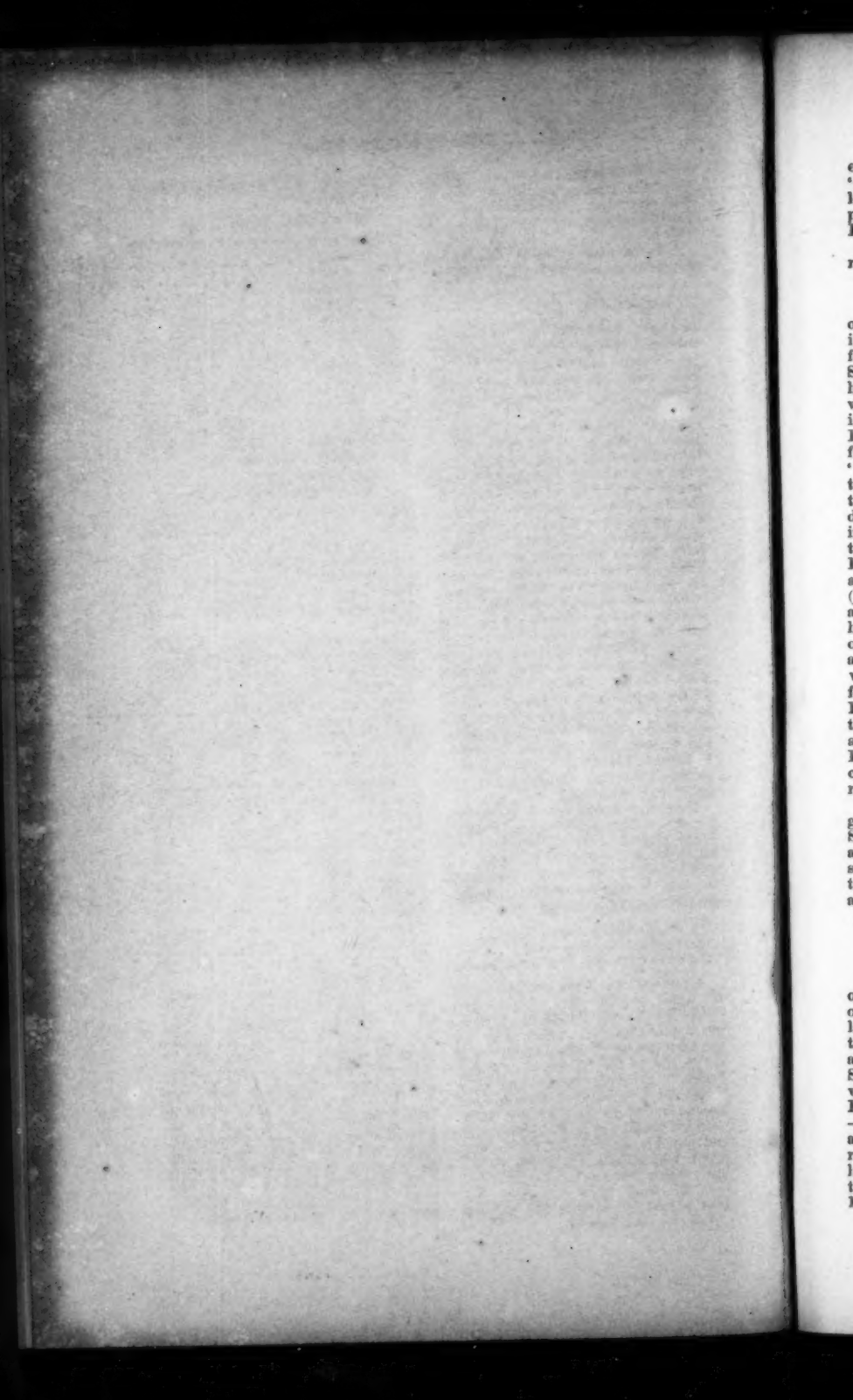


NOTES ON AN OLD LOVE STORY.

"Roused from his throne beneath the wave  
Those holy forms the god embraced—  
A god himself their grave!"

Drawn by Carl Filzky.]

[See the Text.]



every Englishman says with Milton, 'my Shakespeare'; and with an equally lofty reservation, claims every part and parcel—as *effet*, the entire animal—of Bacon.

The mention of these two names recalls us for a time from the attempt

—— 'To climb Parnassus,

By dint o' Greek'

or Latin. Lord Bacon, a Shakespeare in insight, though without heart enough for dramatic reproduction—a kind of Shakespeare-and-lemon-ice — although he has conceded that love, in common with revenge, honour, grief, and fear, is stronger than death, has, in his short Essay devoted to its discussion, scornfully depreciated its power and value. 'The stage,' he says, 'is more beholding to love than the life of man; for as to the stage, love is even matter of comedies, and now and then of tragedies; but in life it doth much mischief; sometimes like a Siren, sometimes like a Fury. You may observe that amongst all the great and worthy persons (whereof the memory remaineth, either ancient or recent), there is not one that hath been transported to the mad degree of love; which shows, that great spirits and great business do keep out this weak passion.' Alas, on this showing, for the magnanimity of Leander and of Romeo! They must be content to join the category of such weaklings as Mars and Samson, Hercules and Solomon. Fidelity, it follows as a corollary, is a chronic weakness; and fickleness, the recovery of greatness.

Every man knows how to lay his finger upon a dozen of instances in which Shakespeare has shown the value he attaches to the 'power of love'; all we shall require of the bard at present is the loan of that concentrated, passionate retrospect of Lyeander:

'Ah, me! for aught that ever I could read,  
Could ever hear by tale or history,  
'The course of true love never did run smooth.'

A profound yet bitter generalization, of which possibly Mr. Chaplin and others have chewed the cud of a particular application, but which may all the gods falsely in the experience of all the rest of the readers of 'London Society!' Of course the popular voice would not have mattered much to Lord Bacon; but whilst the *profanum vulgus*—which we take to be the respectable and amiable majority of the world—revere and cherish the priest of the heart rather than the prophet of Induction, we shall know why the year 1861 passed by without the faintest

agitation for a tercentenary celebration of the birth of Pope's

'Wiseest, brightest, meanest of mankind.'

The nation in general will not blush at the failure to canvass such a commemoration; but it may ask if it was not a pointed, nay even an insulting and recreant mission on the part of Mr. Hepworth Dixon? Leaving the question to be settled by that gentleman with his conscience, let us once more beat out the music hidden in the French distich:—

'C'est l'amour, l'amour, l'amour,  
Que mène le monde à la ronde;'

striking the balance between which sentiment and the English matter-of-fact declaration that Love has

—— 'Been a villain

Since the days of Troy and Helen,'

we may arrive at some such conclusion as this—that if it is love that makes the world go round, it is occasionally obnoxious to an objectionably accelerated velocity in its revolution, or to the risk from time to time of suffering from the introduction of a terrific spoke in its wheel.

Are we writing heartlessly or incongruously? To Niobe alone the sinister gift was accorded of becoming *all tears*. The sunshine sometimes plays, without rebuke from the unities, along the sepulchral avenues of Pere la Chaise; a kitten would know how to extract frolic from a shroud. Shall we redeem ourselves in the eyes of those readers who are preparing tears, by reminding them that greatest grief is dumb, without a paroxysm; that then is the perfection of pathos when all the powers of the body and all the susceptibilities of the heart are paralysed into an agony of silence? If we would *speak* of a tragic subject, we must crave to make our approaches as we can. We have no admiration for a style of grief that is cousin-german to an influenza. We do not think it unmanly to weep; it is decidedly inelegant to snuffle.

There is quite a literature, gathering with the ages, about the touching theme of the loves and misfortunes of Hero and Leander. Nearly all the *greater* poets of ancient and modern times—with the exception of the poet Fletcher and the poet Tupper—have illustrated it. Out of these we select for passing remark the productions of four, the representatives of as many different languages and nationalities. But chiefly our allegiance is due to Schiller; for it is an ideal occurrence peculiar to him to which a sympathetic artist has been attracted. A sketchy background, in

which Musæus, Ovid, and Hood appear, will give a higher relief to the individuality of Schiller than if the last occupied the stage alone.

In the due order of time, Musæus—assuming what, in spite of Waller and the elder Scaliger, few persons will be prepared to dispute, that he is the third-century individual of that name, called the Grammarian, and not the reputed son and pupil of Orpheus, who, according to the Arundelian marbles, flourished nearly seventeen hundred years before—in the due order of time, we say, Musæus ought to have occupied the second and not the first place in the series. But by taking them in the order in which we have announced them, we shall be able to refresh the memory of the half-forgotten reader as to the more salient features of the story; for Ovid's *Heroides*—a kind of literature represented and imitated in our own language by the *England's Heroical Epistles* of Michael Drayton—are, by the fact of their being epistolary episodes, unable to do more than darkly to indicate or to prepare for a catastrophe which they cannot accomplish.

The poem of Musæus, on the *Loves of Hero and Leander*, has always been valued for the refinement of sentiment which it exhibits; for its elegant, scholarly, and sometimes almost epigrammatic precision; for the passion, the warmth, and luxuriance of its love details; for the Homeric, gloomy grandeur, peril and tumult of its *finale*. From the year 1647, when Sir Robert Stapylton first translated it into English, it has been frequently attempted with various success. The following summary cannot profess to be much more glowing than an 'argument.'

Hero is an illustrious young lady, of perfect character and beauty, who lives a sequestered life with but one attendant, in a lofty tower on the steep of Sestos. She is priestess of the goddess of Love, and in that capacity officiates at the *Adonia*, the annual festivals held in honour of Venus, and in commemoration of her flinty lover, Adonis, during which incense is wont to be offered at his shrine in the temple of the goddess. At one memorable and critical celebration, all the youth and beauty of the adjacent shores of two continents and of the islands that studded the neighbouring seas, were congregated; nor did the curious youth of the sterner sex repair to Sestos in smaller numbers, to attend the rites at which they could assist only as spectators. As Hero passes through the temple, her grace and beauty, matched only by the goddess whom she

serves, rivets the attention of all. Of all, Leander alone ventures to love and hope. He is from Abydos, a town on the opposite or Asiatic side of the Hellespont, distant in a straight line little more than a mile from Sestos. By signs, nods and looks, he mutely explains his passion to Hero, who perceives it with joy and reciprocation. He succeeds in obtaining an interview; and, after a proper display of pretty coyness and assenting silence, provokes her to a verbal confession of love. She tells him that, coerced by her parents and the Fates, she dwells apart in her lofty tower close by Sestos, where

'Stormy winds eternal discord keep,  
And, blustering, bellow through the boundless deep.'

Her parents are so imperative that she cannot marry openly; neither, on the other hand, can Leander tarry with her in secret without scandal. Hereupon he volunteers to swim by night across the sea to visit her, if only she will give him the friendly aid of a guiding torch. For some time nothing occurs to interrupt the bliss and fondness of the nocturnal meetings of the lovers. By-and-by cruel winter comes; and still, her love overmastering her sense of Leander's danger, she invites him over. The storm is at its height; the billows are remorseless; the torch is flickering and inconstant; he is baffled and exhausted; and finally, in mid-channel,

'Fainting, he sinks, and with the torch expires.'

With the dawn, the widowed priestess, peering vainly over the waters, at length perceives the corpse of her Leander stretched ghastly pale along the strand. Shrieking, she recognises him; then, faithful to voluntary death,

'From the tower her beauteous body cast,  
And on her lover's bosom breathed her last;  
Nor could the Fates this faithful pair divide—  
They lived united, and united died.'

The eighteenth and nineteenth epistles of Ovid's *Heroides* are respectively entitled 'Leander to Hero,' and 'Hero to Leander.' They have the characteristic grace, tenderness, and vigour of the poet; and in them we have what appears in the external narrative of Musæus, changed, with the change to the first person, into a subjective episode of personal feelings and experiences. Ovid supposes that in consequence of tempestuous weather, Leander has been unable, during a term of seven nights—which seem a year to the chafing lover—to make his adventurous passage. He explains that the bearer of the letter is a hardy mariner, and, withal, a stronger



swimmer than himself; that three times he had disorbed and essayed the hopeless struggle against the mountain billows; complains of the tempest, and invokes the gods by their own amours; and finally, he expresses his resolve to venture everything, let the weather be what it may, rather than submit to a tame acquiescence in the fact that the forces of nature are more powerful than his great love and constancy. Hero, in reply, sets forth her ardent wish for his society, a wish more dominant and exacting than a man can frame or understand. She gives utterance to her fears that some newer flame consumes him; conjures him to come to a renewal of intermitted joys; and finally, in an accession of thoughtful devotion, during which she narrates a dream of ill omen, prays him to be mindful of the perils of the passage, and to be tender of his own safety. Alas, for true love! In life they were never to meet again.

The 'Hero and Leander' of Thomas Hood is perhaps not so popularly known as many of those humorous poems with which, by an intelligible tendency, he is most commonly associated. The writer, however, seems by the fact and by the manner of his dedication of his verses to Coleridge, to have shared in that self-gratulation to which Lord Byron gave expression when he had completed his 'Lament of Tasso.' And, indeed, Hood's is a poem worthy of a companion-place alongside of Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis;' and worthy of a place immeasurably superior, if estimated by its unimpeachable purity. All the exquisite suspense; all the balancing and poising; all the ebbing and flowing; all the phenomena, in short, of a virtuous love, are in this charming poem represented very nearly without a drawback. It is fitting that a poem which would seem to have been produced about the same time as the 'Plea of the Midsummer Fairies' should introduce us to some ideal marine creation, some Nereid, sea-nymph, or mermaid. This introduction it is which constitutes, so to say, the idiosyncrasy of Hood's poem, so that its individuality can be merged in no other.

Leander falls a victim not so much to the storm as to the ill-judged affection of a sea-nymph, who, loving 'not wisely but too well,' and being charmed with his face and figure as he wrestles with the waters, takes him down to the depths of the ocean, unwitting of his necessities of respiration. Very beautifully does Hood describe the joy of the maiden at her possession; her ignorance of Leander's true condition, when, already drowned, she believes him swooning;

her song to him to awaken him to an interest in herself and the novel glories of her submarine world; the tardy growth of conviction that even in his coveted society there is no fellowship; her agony at his death, her sorrow and remorse. Against hope, she hopes to bring back the lustre to his unspeculating eyes, by buoying him again to the surface. She lays him on the sand; but all her cares and arts are vain. Whilst she has dived in quest of choicest seaweeds to make his couch more easy, fishermen bear away the body of Leander. And when a crowd assembles on their report, the returned and frightened sea-maid eludes their grasp, and vanishes from their view into the recesses of her native element. Hero, meanwhile, still expectant, holds forth the signal torch in vain; and wearied and sickened with the deferring of her hope, and at length certified of her lover's destruction, she determines that in no case shall they be divided.

'Then from the giddy steep she madly springs  
Grasping her maiden robes, that vainly kept  
Panting abroad, like unavailing wings,  
To save her from her death. The sea-maid  
wept,  
'And in a crystal cave her corpse enshrined,  
No meaner sepulchre should Hero find!'

'In spite of Humboldt,' says Sir E. B. Lytton, in the preface to his admirable translation of Schiller's 'Hero and Leander,' from which the extracts that follow are taken, 'we venture to think that Schiller certainly does not narrate Greek legend in the spirit of an ancient Greek. The Gothic sentiment in its ethical depth and mournful tenderness more or less pervades all that he translates from classic fable into modern pathos. The grief of Hero, in the ballad subjoined, touches closely on the lamentations of Thekla, in Wallenstein. . . . Nothing can be more foreign to the Hellenic Genius (if we except the very disputable intention of the "Prometheus") than the interior and typical design which usually exalts every conception in Schiller. But it is perfectly open to the modern poet to treat of ancient legends in the modern spirit. Though he select a Greek story, he is still a modern who narrates—he can never make himself a Greek, any more than Æschylus in the "Persæ" could make himself a Persian. But this is still more the privilege of the poet in narrative or lyrical composition than in the drama; for in the former he does not abandon his identity, as in the latter he must—yet even this *must* has its limits. . . . . When the poet raises

the dead, it is not to restore, but to remodel.'

These remarks are just. Schiller, in his introduction of Neptune as a prominent and half-pitying personage into his composition, has shown a spirit of kin to that of the old northern worshippers of the gigantic personifications of the forces of an uncouth nature—a spirit which led them to imagine the melting mood of the world-artificer Thor, when he made his last remonstrant appearance in his own creation, from which he was on the eve of being exiled and estranged in favour of Christianity, under the auspices of a too zealous king Olaf. Of all divine powers introduced into Schiller's ballad, the God of the Sea is the most important. The chain of connection is essentially one of water. The quotation of a few stanzas will bring this out; and, short as our space is becoming, we shall have the opportunity of pointing out another beautiful coincidence, another link in this unity, for which any version of the story, and not Schiller's only, is remarkable. Hero thus addresses Neptune, whom principally of all the gods she invokes in the extremity and dread of her suspense, for the protection of her lover, claiming his clemency by right of sympathy:—

'Nor vainly, sovereign of the sea,  
Did Eros send his shafts to thee;  
What time the Ram of Gold,  
Bright Helle, with her brother, bore  
To Asian coasts, thy waters o'er,  
From Ido's wrath of old!  
Swift, by the maiden's charms subdued,  
Thou cam'st from out the gloomy waves,  
And in thy mighty arms she sank  
Into thy bridal caves;  
A goddess with a god, to keep  
In endless youth, beneath the deep,  
Her solemn ocean-court!  
And still she smooths thine angry tides,  
Tames thy wild heart, and, favouring, guides  
The sailor to the port!  
Beautiful Helle, bright one, hear  
Thy lone adoring suppliant pray!  
And guide this eve—oh! guide my love  
Along the wonted way!

But all in vain the maiden calls on Neptune, in vain on Helle, in vain on Jove, in vain on Venus, for,

'Loud, and more loud the tempest raves,  
In thunder break the mountain waves,  
White-foaming on the rock—  
No ship that ever swept the deep  
Its ribs of gnarled oak could keep  
Unshattered by the shock.  
Dies in the blast the guiding torch  
To light the straggler to the strand;  
'Tis death to battle with the wave,  
And death no less to land!

Dawn shows the corpse of Leander; and Hero continues not long unresolved. Since her lover can no longer come to her, she will, once for ever, go to her lover:—

'Ye solemn Powers men shrink to name,  
Your might is here, your rights ye claim—  
Yet think not I repine:  
Soon closed my course; yet I can bless  
The life that brought me happiness.  
The fairest lot was mine!  
Living, have I thy temple served,  
Thy consecrated priestess been—  
My last glad offering now receive,  
Venus, thou mightiest queen!

The foregoing stanza is a paraphrase:—

'I thank thee, God! that I have lived and loved.'

In the next verse, which is the last of Schiller's noble poem, we have the heroine putting her resolve into execution. It is to this last verse that the artist has peculiarly adapted the illustration. As we look at the engraving, transferred to these pages from the original drawing by Carl Piloty in the magnificent Cotta Edition of Schiller, and are, *par parenthèse*, reminded, with a difference, of the 'Christian Martyr' of Paul Delarocche—as we mark the repose and calm of the lovers, tranquil because a relenting sea has floated them off in company, we ask if we were not premature in saying that Hero's prayers to Neptune, to Helle, to Venus, were in vain? We are not now to learn that a prayer is frequently truly answered, which is left without response in the terms of its petition. Has not the sea-god taken them both to himself? Has not Helle performed her imputed office of taming the wild rage of her husband? And has not Venus—let us think of her, for this occasion, as Aphrodite, if we would effectually point out the minor coincidence that completes the unity of element, which a moment ago we promised to indicate—has not Aphrodite, we repeat, given a proof of her sympathy with her devoted priestess by caring that they should be floated off together on the bosom of that element from the froth of which she herself had erst divinely emerged?

We claim to be pardoned for the slight anticipation: we have not yet given the last verse of Schiller, but we were unwilling that any words of ours should awkwardly trail in the wake of his.

'Flashed the white robe along the air,  
And from the tower that beetled there  
She plunged into the wave.  
Roused from his throne beneath the waves,  
Those holy forms the god embraced—  
A god himself their grave.

Pleased with his prey, he glides along—  
More blithe the murmured music seems,  
As gush from unexhausted urns  
His everlasting streams?

The two following short poems, the one by reason of the prominence it gives to a threadbare conceit, and the other by its flippancy, are unsuited to the tender gravity of the text, but may be deemed not unworthy of an introduction *sub rosa*, which, being interpreted, means in a postscript.

Robert Herrick, except Churchill, the most unpriestly of priests, who baptized his pagan *Hesperides* in the fons *Christianus* of his *Noble Numbers*, gives a trifle on

LEANDER'S OBSEQUIES.

'When as Leander young was drown'd,  
No heart by Love receiv'd a wound;  
But on a rock himself sate by,  
There weeping sup'abundantly,  
Sighs numberless he cast about,  
And all his tapers thus put out;  
His head upon his hand he laid,  
And sobbing deeply, thus he said:  
Ah, cruel sea! and, looking on't,  
Wept as he'd drown'd the Hellespont.  
And sure his tongue had more exprest,  
But that his tears forbade the rest.'

The quotation of the second may suffice to lay the expostulating ghost of Lord Byron, who claims a moment's remembrance whenever the book of the 'Annals of the Hellespont' is opened. The verses appear among his lordship's works as having been

WRITTEN AFTER SWIMMING FROM  
SESTOS TO ABYDOS, MAY 9, 1810.

- 'If, in the month of dark December,  
Leander, who was slightly wont  
(What maid will not the tale remember?)  
To cross thy stream, proud Hellespont!
- 'If, when the wintry tempest roar'd,  
He sped to Hero, nothing loth,  
And thus of old thy current pour'd,  
Fair Venus! how I pity both!
- 'For me, degenerate modern wretch,  
Though in the genial month of May,  
My dripping limbs I faintly stretch,  
And think I've done a feat to-day.
- 'But since he cross'd the rapid tide,  
According to the doubtful story,  
To woo—and—Lord knows what beside,  
And swam for love, as I for glory:
- 'Twere hard to say who fared the best:  
Sad mortals! thus the gods still plague you!  
He lost his labour, I my jest;  
For he was drown'd, and I've the agree.'

A. H. G.

INFATUATION.

**B**RAVA, Kate! they're all enraptured  
And the toils were neatly set.  
Brava, Kate! He's nearly captured,  
But he has not caught you yet.

Caught you! He who tries will rue it.  
Breaking tender hearts is fun,  
And unruffled you can do it,  
For, my Kate, you have not one.

Have not one! I read you better  
Than my boyhood used to do.  
Read, and mark you, since a letter  
Cut my heart, and seared it too.

Have not one! Were all creation  
Hanging on a thread, I know,  
If 't would save you a vexation,  
You would snap, and let it go.

Yet for useful friends affection  
You can feign,—can love your mare,  
And your bright eyes make detection  
Of their hollow hardness rare.

*Infatuation.*

So you'll have a host of offers,  
 First to favour, then to slight;  
 Eldest sons with heavy coffers,  
 Younger ones, alas! with light.

And you'll angle, angle, angle,  
 For the fish of heaviest weight;  
 Slightly hook, and let them dangle,  
 Thinking each will do—for bait.

But a coronet will never  
 Rest on your ambitious curls,  
 For, although I own you're clever,  
 You are scarce a match for earls.

So your little skiff will carry  
 Topsails, till it sinks at last;  
 And you'll deem it time to marry  
 When the golden noon is past,—

When your beauty is departing,  
 And your appetite amiss,  
 And your vanity is smarting  
 At a younger rival's bliss.

Then, like some untiring spider,  
 You the flimsy lines will set;  
 Spread them wider, wider, wider,  
 And retiring watch the net—

Watch the net, till out to throttle,  
 Out to manacle the prey,—  
 Out, to find it no bluebottle,  
 But a tearing wasp at bay.

Ah! my Kate,—a frightful matter  
 Will the life you live be then;  
 None to flirt with, none to flatter,  
 And those tender dancing men,

Who would now with feeble passion  
 In their gloves your fingers fold,  
 Will, believe me, 'tis their fashion,  
 Call you ugly, stupid, old.

Then shall I, the wronged, be righted,—  
 I be righted! no, not I:  
 I shall grieve to see thee slighted,—  
 I shall love thee till I die.

R. W. E.



## CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS.

CHRISTMAS decorations! The very words seem to bring us a sense both of cold and warmth. We cannot disconnect them from paths that are snow-besprinkled, and from church-bells that ring out clearly—from skies that seem full of frostiness—from the earth that rings under our feet—and yet how bright the fires blaze, and how far-off windows sparkle! There scarlet holly-berries shine redly amidst the ever-greens, whose glossy leaves are clustered so thickly in the old hall. Every trophy there, whether armour, or spoils of the chase, is now itself crowned again with these green and shining leaves.

People say that character shows itself in the way that a woman dresses. That a woman who follows mainly her own taste in dress will certainly array herself in those very forms and colours that are found to bear most resemblance to the shape of her mind, so to speak, and to her mental colouring. What a difference we all know there is between the long, graceful lines, and soft, blending colours of some, and the compact and comfortable, but gayer hues of others. And, again, the dreadfully neat and angular shapes, and frightful cold blues, and greens, or dust-colour, contrasted with iron grey, in which some mortals will clothe themselves. There positively must be connection between the people and clothes! We seem to see directly the tact and softness—the active, hospitable, friskiness of some of our types of people—and alas! to shrink from the cold and uncongenial atmosphere of those who are lost so utterly as not to care what they wear! And then, with still more truth if possible, it is said that rooms have a character of their owner. In many cases, of course, a room bears marks of occupations—we see the books, and the music, the drawings, the flowers and work, the light or shade, the general colouring, all these things help us to guess at the character of the inmate; and so we come by degrees to say that the

room has character. Now let us take as an instance of an incongruous mixture, the case of an old and magnificent entrance-hall in some fine country place, or say, a great dining-room, panelled with dark carved oak, with arched and canopied ceiling, with a gallery running round, and a chimney-piece up to at least the height of one moderate story. It would hardly seem that the loveliest paper roses would adorn *quite* satisfactorily those magnificent old walls. Wreaths and festoons too, and elegant muslin draperies, very modern inscriptions in legible pink and white letters, flags of bran-new gloss, and lance-heads with brilliant gilding—now, upon my word, these things are *not* so unknown, even now-a-days, as they ought to be! Nineteenth-century young ladies, who delight in mediæval scrolls and Gothic architecture, are terribly given, somehow, to most incongruous mixtures. Let things *be* in keeping, and then they have a character; making them half-and-half always, must end in mimicry.

With churches, too! how little people adapt things to the edifice! You want to adorn what you have, not to create a new style. If there is, indeed, beautiful Gothic architecture, how very easy it is to wreath it and make it festal. You do not want, by any means, Italian devices, or straight Roman forms, triangles, and set figures amongst the rich-moulded leafage and the darkening forest circles, and the quaint old gurgoyles that constitute Gothic luxuriance. And if, on the other hand, you rejoice in the style of Mr. Compo, it is to be greatly feared that no wreaths will improve matters much. The only way, in such a case, is to make what you do make self-contained—as sometimes in foreign churches, the poverty of walls and place is hidden by green boughs and hangings; or as poor rooms are transformed into a sort of beauty simply by the care and taste that has adorned them.

One can understand very well

that in a square village schoolroom, with whitewashed walls and flat roof, it would be extremely difficult to obtain effects of high art. To make the place gay and cheerful with flags and modern inscriptions, to fasten up long festoons, and to dispose wreaths of pinks and roses here and there, would really be, in this case, the best thing to attempt. The legends sketched out on calico and formed in leaves and flowers, the flowers of shades of pink paper, and with yellow and red for a change—all these things produce their full effect, no doubt, on the eyes they are meant for. Long will it be, probably, before the most splendid Belgravian ball-room will ever be one hundred part so much admired by its crowd. The guests here are not critical, and are not above being charmed.

In churches and halls, however, it seems especially certain that the general style of architecture must be in a great degree followed. One cannot otherwise keep up the unity of the design.

Gothic designs and inscriptions, wreaths that wind round pillars, or simply surround the capitals with their long drooping fringes—(fir and yew being often more feathery even than ivy)—letters in large Gothic characters, done, perhaps, in red berries and yew-leaves—such are the natural ways that every one thinks of for Gothic.

But in strictly modern edifices we must take a different line. Here we must have great knots and sparkling bouquets of leaves or flowers. The bouquets even of leaves may be made sparkling if well arranged, with a sufficient contrast of dark-green pendant foliage, like *berberis latifolia* and of yellow holly, or *aucuba* and red Virginian creeper. Besides, you may have berries purple, and white, and green; and if you mind your colouring, and do not mix too many shades, you will be surprised to find what very bright knots you will have.

I never can see, myself, why it should be improper to adorn even churches in such common ways as these. In the churches abroad one sees regular stands of flowerpots,

and it cannot be said that this implies want of reverence, but rather of a desire to bring the best beauty they can to God's service, and nothing, it may be observed, is half so telling in winter as a number of pots of evergreen—in windows, or in sanctuaries—with what flowers one has arranged about the front.

In halls these answer admirably, and till people have tried a few times the effect of large fir-trees lighted up, they will probably go without one of the most effective ornaments to such a place.

Those who were present in the conservatory at South Kensington when it was (last season) once or twice lighted up, will surely remember the pine-trees and the brilliant scarlet nasturtiums and geraniums—*tropaeolum*, by-the-by, is the orthodox name for the former plant. Both these, with a little trouble, could be grown in large square flowerpots, and trained on a trellis affixed to it, so as to be made most brilliant winter ornaments.

The wreaths and their manufacture form a really important item. There are the great massive wreaths that are meant to encircle some heavy pillar, or to line some deep recess, or to lie heavily round the feet of large and massive pedestals; and then there are those light traceries that serve for more delicate work, the lines of box and myrtle that stray along fine-carved tracery, and the scarcely firmer fabrics that follow the lines and curves of the slender screen or stately canopy.

The two best ways of making these are by mounting spray by spray on a strong rope to which each is tied firmly; and for the delicate lines, by laying one small spray on another, tying or wiring each to the stalk of the last, without even breaking the converting wire or twine.

But how to form actual letters is always a solemn question! Card-board does bend, most certainly, and it lasts at best only once. Zinc is very heavy, increasing the various difficulties of hanging to a great degree; it also flaps about in a most perplexing and altogether distressing manner. My preference is



for wire, mere frames of strong wire, the thickness of the wire no greater than is downrightly requisite to make it hang without bending. The leaves or berries used for one moderate-sized letter are not heavy; but I know this has one great difficulty—the wire letters have to be made for one, and I have a great suspicion that as far as any hints in this present number of 'London Society' may be valued, they will be valued in proportion as they are self-sustained. A talent of 'making shift,' and a knack for expedients, are what most people want when suddenly set to work. I advise, in consequence, that all those who want to do anything will forthwith imagine all possible means of doing it; they can then consider if some possible thing is not practicable. Once got to details and substitutes come readily for any special want.

Letters, then, may be made by cutting out perforated zinc; or they may be made by having two or three of each letter cut out in common pasteboard, which then being pasted together, become as hard as a board, so as to keep the shape well; or they may be made of wire frames covered with common black canvas, or even with mere black net. But all sorts of means are used for getting and keeping shape, and perhaps each person manages best his own way. One caution is needed, I know though, and that is to make the capital letters larger in proportion than the smaller ones. An immense difference in the appearance is made by observing this. And when special words are put in yellow or red letters, while the rest of the legend is dark-green yew, or holly, the effect is admirable.

The letters of inscriptions may be made in many ways. The dried real flowers seem to me to have great advantages. They are to be bought at a shop—Rocking's, at Covent Garden, where there are pink gay acrostichums, red rosebuds—everlastings of all sorts. These flowers are dried abroad in the same way as the grapes—so much worn of late in head-dresses. They are gathered quite dry, and put into a deep jar in layers, covered with

fine sand, the flowers not being allowed to touch each other at all. The jar is then kept in the sun, or in a very cool oven, till the sand has absorbed the whole moisture from the flowers, which retain their colours unchanged. Carnations, probably, would answer very well thus, and the German Aster, I fancy, would do perfectly. In the course of another summer, experiments will be easy; and things that once look well when dried are not likely to fade afterwards, so that only a few days is needed for first experiments as to any particular flower. Nothing could be prettier, where plain walls have to be decorated, than the simple diaper patterns that were shown in the spring at South Kensington. Very thin lines of green intersecting each other in squares of five or six inches. The crossed trellis-work thus formed being dotted with flowers here and there. White and pink everlastings would answer for this charmingly; so would the dried red roses already mentioned for letters.

The long green lines of broom are exceedingly light and delicate, and gorse, which is always in flower, is admirably adapted for alternating in the bright flower knots with the scarlet holly-berries, or with the purple-ivy, or with the white snow-berry. The poisonous nature of some berries must, however, be well remembered.

But all these things are birds of passage. They only appear for a day or two bright and pleasant to see; but not things to delight a whole winter. I cannot conclude this paper without suggesting a few things of that sort. Already in 'London Society' I have written once or twice of the delightful German fashion of growing bulbs in great masses, and each winter convinces me more and more that no other flower fashion possesses the charm that this does. The delight of seeing the gay little buds appearing, and the green sheafs of leaves unfolding to let them out—the brilliant flower-cups opening one lovelier than the other—this for its ruby colour, and that for its pearly whiteness; another pencilled exquisitely,

and then the white carved snow-drops, they are so very lovely, and they have such infinite change for us! The scent, too, is to me far beyond hot-house flowers. There is something at once so delicate and so fragrant in their blossoms. Hyacinths are too powerful; they do best, therefore, for large rooms and windows, or for the glass-cases in which they grow most perfectly.

Those who have planted no spring flowers, for this once can repair their neglect, as a quantity have been planted by a florist at Covent Garden,\* which will just be coming on, I suppose, when this paper is read. Rustic bowls and dishes, and stands, and boxes may thus be had; and I understand that a few glass-cases are also filled in a similar way to those I have had myself.

Another year, however, this work may be done at home. The rustic boxes and stands have only to be lined with charcoal, and filled with a compost of cocoa fibre and charcoal. The bulbs—red Van Thol tulips, blue and white crocuses, snow-drops, and Roman hyacinths have only then to be planted thickly, watered, set in the dark—in total darkness that is—for a month, and then to be kept as close to the light as possible in a cool airy window. They must never be allowed to dry, and a most lovely cluster of blossoms will begin to open before Christmas, going on in succession till perhaps the end of January, or even much later. Miniature hyacinths, rose Van Thols, vermilion brilliant tulips, and blue Scilla Sibirica greatly add to the lastingness.

Plant-tables filled in this way are perfectly bewitching, only mind and put the tallest things in the centre. The vermilion brilliant tulip, the pink Van Thol, and the Roman hyacinths are the tallest things I have named here. The red and scarlet Van Thols are invaluable, and should be put in everything, as I never yet saw them out of place, and then they are very low growing, and can be put about anywhere.

Boxes for either outside or inside windows are very pretty when filled

altogether with crocuses of every shade of blue and white, dotted with these tulips. The tounsole tulips, I think great ugly objects; but some people like them, for one sees them in spring often. The double Van Shols are red and yellow too, and they are sweet-scented I think. They certainly are very gay, among quite the earliest flowers, and about the cheapest of any.

for growing bulbs need never

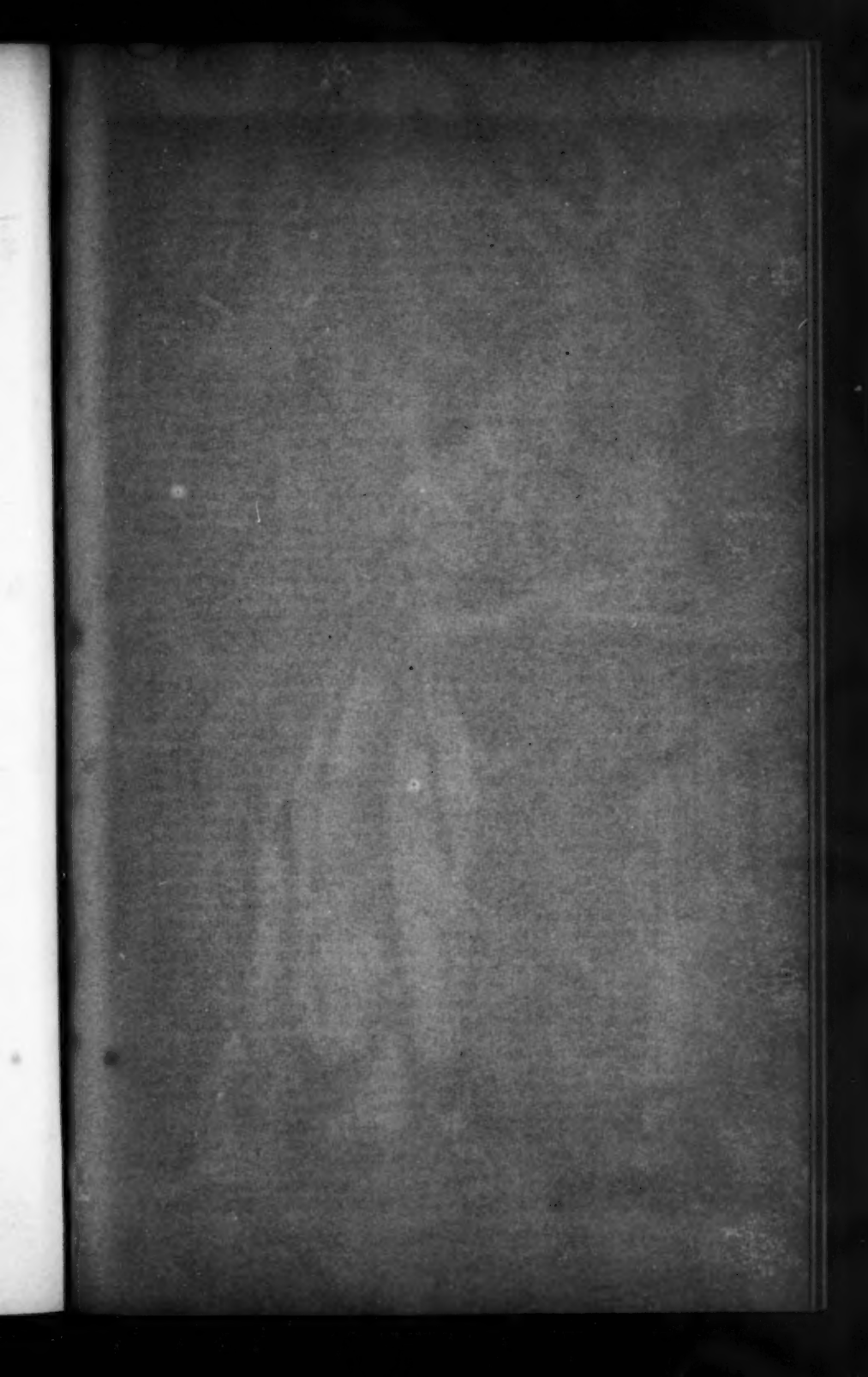
People setting up boxes and stands trouble themselves about having holes for drainage. They are the greatest nuisance. Bulbs want them no more in boxes than hyacinths do in glasses, always provided they have plenty of charcoal to keep things sweet; and the trouble of damaged tables and of pools on the carpet is infinite.

For pots of plants, as well as for beds of bulbs, nothing can be more pretty when detached stands are wanted than the little round tables,† which are extremely cheap, fitted with zinc trays, and made of the wood of old currant-trees.

So much for decorations. I hope that the ball-rooms may look nice, and that the halls and churches will be done suitably to their own style. But they are a large subject, and a difficult one to handle. My own especial branch has contained itself in the last pages. It is not every one who can do the one suitable thing, original, and splendid, and bright, and dazzling too, as when years ago the river ran down the great staircase of the Emperor! I was talking of these decorations yesterday to a friend of mine, and it happened that she had been at Paris years ago, at the time of the Queen's visit there. A staircase had to be hidden, and a river was brought down it! By means of the palace waterworks the stream came in at a window, and thence it glided down the whole of the wide staircase, each step was covered with glass—looking-glass was everywhere—the sides were walls of crystal, all hung over with ferns. It was one flashing torrent of light, and foam, and freshness.

\* Messrs. Barr and Sugden, King Street, Covent Garden.

† Messrs. Hammond, 12, Baker Street.





"BLUE BOY," OR, THE LETTER IN THE GOBLET.

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

Drawn by Robert Dudley.

See page 17.

# LONDON SOCIETY.

## The Christmas Number for 1864.

### THE EDITOR'S CHRISTMAS GREETING.



CHRISTMAS once more ! The season  
Of joy and peace on earth,  
When all is full to overflow  
Of happiness and mirth.  
When every heart with gladness  
Is fain to chirp and sing :  
When Care and Crabb'd Fancies fly,  
And KINDLINESS IS KING.

And, lo, the Christmas Genius  
The blowing hearth beside,  
With kindly glance and friendly smile,  
Is watching o'er our task, the while,  
Our readers' leisure to beguile,  
We labour to provide  
Fresh flights of airy fancy,  
New thoughts in prose and rhyme ;  
With many a fair design of Art  
Well suited to the time.

Then, reader, turn these pages  
In gentle spirit o'er ;  
Read—and you will find no dearth  
Of Christmas gaiety and mirth  
Within their ample store.  
Nor yet for deeper purpose  
And thought of graver strain,  
As fits the solemn Christmas-tide  
Shall search be made in vain !

Jests to make laughter ripple,  
And dreams of bygone years,  
Tales to give carols to the heart,  
Or fill the eyes with tears.  
These far and wide we gather,  
And make a goodly show,  
Wreathed with the holly's shining leaf  
And sacred mistletoe.

Go forth then, Christmas pages,  
 And travel round the world  
 Wherever English accents ring,  
 And English sails are furled.  
 Go forth throughout this island—  
 To cot and palace room,—  
 And further yet, to foreign strand,  
 Where sojourn exiles from our land,  
 Whose hearts with pleasure shall  
     expand  
 To hear our news from home !

Where in the Western forests  
 The settler's cabin smokes,  
 Where bow the monarchs of the wood  
 Before his sturdy strokes :  
 Where in the Eastern jungle,  
 Beside the Indian stream,  
 The white tops of the marshalled tents,  
 Among the palm-trees gleam :

Where in the Southern ocean  
 The sunlight ever smiles,  
 Where sleep within their coral zones,  
 Clusters of fairy isles :  
 Where in the Northern silence  
 And endless wastes of snow  
 The adventurous vessel, staunch and  
     bold,  
 Beleaguered by the frost and cold,  
 Lies ice-bound on the floe.

Go forth then, task completed—  
 Our welcome annual toil,  
 And thus our Christmas greeting bear  
 To many a distant soil.  
 Yet ere we close our labour,  
 And you your path pursue,  
 List to our words at parting, said  
 In yet a verse or two.

The band of trusty liegemen  
 Of pencil and of pen—  
 And those fair hands that wield them  
     too

To aid us now and then—  
 To fill these Christmas pages  
 Have wrought both well and hard ;  
 And every soldier in our ranks  
 Has earned our greeting and our  
     thanks—  
 Artist and scribe and bard !

To you too, gentle reader,  
 Where'er your lot is cast,  
 Wherever Fate has fixed your home  
 Throughout earth's regions vast,—  
 The Editor—so please you—  
 Would by these pages send  
 All wishes due for Christmas cheer,  
 All greetings of the closing year,  
 ' God speed ! ' from friend to  
     friend.





## CHRISTMAS EVE IN A NIGHT TRAIN.

SOME few years ago we met casually a clever friend who was manager of a certain railway, and found, after the usual greetings, that we were both suffering from a very common annoyance, usually known as 'depression of spirits,' although neither of us was able to assign any substantial reason for our condition at the moment.

'Come with' me,' said our friend. 'Whenever I am in "the blues" I adopt a simple but efficacious remedy, and you shall try it.'

'And canst thou minister to a mind diseased?' was, of course, the natural and time-honoured rejoinder.

'Yes, I can; and I'll tell you what I do. I wait until the line is clear, and then jump on a pilot engine, run fifty or sixty miles down, and return again under the hour. The excitement of the journey always puts the demons to flight.'

The absurdity of this proposition had the effect of dispelling our own megrims as we laughed heartily at the notion of consigning our invaluable body to a pilot engine, steaming along at the rate of a hundred and twenty miles an hour.

We did not accept our friend's invitation, but subsequently, acting upon his discovery, have more than once sought the excitement of Thames Street when business was at its height, and have found that a walk down that river-side thoroughfare has dispelled every other feeling but one of thankfulness for a safe deliverance from danger and death. Let any *malade imaginaire* try it. The bags, barrels, and bales swinging over-head from every gradation of height, the jamming of carts and cabs, the unparliamentary 'cheeking' (we believe that is the word) of cabmen, carters, and truck-haulers—the bawling of grimy coal and corn-porters (who certainly ask, 'By y' leave,' but require such an immediate compliance that if you hesitate a moment you are pirouetting in the gutter), the roaring which comes from the opened windows of gloomy taprooms, filled with half-tipsy fellows, emitting clouds of most villanous tobacco, are a combination of exciting causes sufficient to stimulate the most desponding.

On the river-side of the street are numerous alleys which lead down to the Thames, and in one of them a country friend of ours (let us call him Jack Tracey), when in London, with the in-

tention of visiting an aunt, found himself during a thick November fog, and continued to follow its course until he tumbled off the end of a landing stage, and fell plump into the river. It was fortunately low water, and the mud bath which received him would certainly have been his death had not two or three coal-heavers carousing in the taproom of the 'Pickled Herring' heard his cries and come to his rescue. When Jack was dragged ashore and examined by the light in the taproom, he appeared to be clothed from head to heel in a suit of congealed fog: so that after he had been taken into the back yard and scraped he looked not unlike the grey monster in 'Frankenstein,' and 'smelt so,' as Hamlet says, that *patchouli* might really have been considered an agreeable perfume by comparison. It was lucky that Jack had found such quarters, as it was questionable whether any less dirty hostelry would have received him in the filthy condition he was then: but there were other odours than those from 'Araby the blest' pervading the 'Pickled Herring,' and Jack's muddiness was, perhaps, an addition to the *bouquet*. The landlady, having stipulated that Jack should be valetted in the kitchen before he was taken up-stairs, prepared for him a warm bed, with two hot bricks for his feet, and then administered copious doses of bad rum-and-water softened with salt butter. The effects of her treatment, combined as they were with the shock, fog, and rough hauling of his rescuers, were apparent in the morning, and eventuated in a state of fever which kept poor Jack an inmate of the 'Pickled Herring' for nearly three weeks, his condition being unknown to his friends for more than a fortnight of that time, owing to the untrustworthiness of the pot-boy—a drunken old fellow of fifty—who had spent the abiding with which he had been entrusted to pay the postage, and having afterwards lost the letter, had sufficient shame to keep his own counsel.

When Jack was convalescent enough to amuse himself by reading, he was particularly interested in the run of the library at the 'Pickled Herring,' which, however, was very limited in extent, and not particularly interesting in choice of subjects, as it consisted of several ancient 'Moore's Almanacs,' two odd volumes of the 'Newgate Calendar,' illustrated, a mutilated copy of 'Tales

of Terror,' and an old 'ready reckoner,' much thumbed and soiled at the pages referring to Dry and Beer measure. As Jack had rewarded his deliverers on the night of his rescue, their interest in him had ceased, and having no other acquaintance in the neighbourhood, the poor solitary invalid had plenty of time at his disposal for his literary pursuits. By the time a second letter had brought his Aunt Hester to his bedside, he knew every tale of blood by rote, and was quite familiar with the exploits of Mr. Richard Turpin and Jack the Pirate. Aunt Hester lived at Hoxton, wherever that may be, and Jack was removed to her house as soon as he was strong enough to bear the journey and a cabman could be found who knew the locality.

Good nursing soon restored Jack, not quite to his pristine vigour, as the phrase runs. His early rum-and-water treatment, or the fog and the mud, had left him with an impaired digestion, which was a great affliction, as Christmas time was close at hand, and it being the custom at Jack's home, near Portsmouth, to keep the festive season with plain but prodigal hospitality. Aunt Hester, a married branch of the Portsmouth tree, had been grafted with a similar reverence for Christmas cheer, and it was generally supposed that she had won the heart of her husband, an eminent exciseman, by her incomparable mince-pies, which she compounded with as much secrecy as is known to attend the manufacture of Day and Martin's blacking. If Jack Tracey had a predilection—No! more than that—a positive passion for anything in the world it was for mince-pies; and defying dyspepsia and its attendant agonies, he abandoned himself recklessly to the gratification of his appetite on Christmas Eve, preparatory to his departure by the night mail train for Portsmouth, where he was expected to eat his Christmas dinner. Aunt Hester had dressed her little parlour in holly and mistletoe, so that the portrait of the exciseman, hanging in the place of honour on the wall, looked like a Jack-in-the-green peeping out of his 'bower of greenery' on the merry party—three neighbours and Jack—assembled at an early supper, whereat Aunt Hester's mince-pies made a liberal display, and commanded the earnest attention of her nephew. Aunt Hester knew that Jack, by his free indulgence, was taking misery to his—well!—his bosom, but her hospitable heart would not permit her to

raise a warning voice, and the Devourer after a time was filled and happy. Yes, quite happy, for the eminent exciseman was as much an adept at composing gin-punch as his wife was at compounding mince-meat; and so insinuating in its character was the mixture, that, like other tricky spirits, it beguiled frail mortals occasionally, leading them into strange adventures. Jack Tracey had taken, at his uncle's earnest solicitation, that treacherous 'one glass more,' as a specific against the dangers of night air and the tedium of night travelling, not that Jack was any way 'fou,' nor had he 'just a drappie in his ee,' which so poetically expresses incipient intoxication; he was only comfortable and happy—nothing more.

As Jack drove to the station through the busy streets—busy despite the snow which had fallen—he regarded with admiration the grocers' windows, bright with gas-lights, and bursting almost with currants, raisins, and citron-peel, piled therein, garnished all about with holly-sprigs, until he wished, in his heart of hearts, that Christmas time came oftener than once a-year, and that mince-pies were never out of season.

Jack had been franked in a cab to the station by the eminent exciseman, but found it impossible to avoid giving the driver an extra sixpence in honour of the season, although his illness at the 'Pickled Herring' had drained his exchequer almost, and made it advisable for him to travel by a third-class carriage, as he was too independent to borrow money of his relatives.

There was considerable bustle at the station, which amused Jack after he had taken his ticket, much kissing and shaking of hands between friends and relations, and one neatly-dressed girl hugged an old woman so affectionately and so long that Jack was almost disposed to ask to be taken into partnership. When the bell rang, however, the young girl took a parting kiss, and entering a third-class carriage, was followed by Jack, as though he had a right to escort her, but he found that she was already provided with companions. One was an elderly, rough, seafaring man, who, for some reason of his own, wore the knot of his thick red cotton neckerchief under his right ear, his head being covered by a black fur sea-cap. Next to him sat a smart sailor, and the young girl took her place in a corner on the opposite seat. She appeared to be either tired or thoughtful, as she only replied with a grunt to

some remarks about 'granny' which the young man made to her, and then she rested her arm upon a pile of bundles and baskets on the seat beside her. All this Jack saw by the feeble light of the carriage lamp; and then he began to speculate on the probable relation his fellow-travellers bore to each other, deciding that the young people were engaged lovers, and the old man was the father of the pretty maiden.

The train was soon in motion, and Jack Tracey wrapping himself up in his new railway rug—a present from his aunt—placed his feet upon the vacant seat opposite to him, with the intention of sleeping away some of the tediousness of the journey before him. He found the determination more difficult of accomplishment than he had anticipated, as his 'bosom's lord sat' by no means 'lightly on its throne,' and some of the tribulations which aunt Hester had foreboded, in her own mind, as awaiting her nephew, began to possess him. His discomfort was not in any way mitigated, when the two seamen lighted short pipes charged with very strong tobacco, and the copious clouds which they proceeded to send forth soon made breathing difficult, nearly obscuring the miserable light blinking above their heads.

Jack did not care to remonstrate with such rough-and-ready-looking offenders, and as the snow was again falling fast, he could not lower the window of the carriage without danger of taking cold; his only hope of deliverance was that the pretty girl in the corner might be inconvenienced by the fumigation, and obtain some cessation on the part of her friends. But she was evidently used to it, or too absorbed by her own reflections to interrupt the enjoyment of her companions.

The old man's pipe was at length exhausted, and Jack, seeing by looking askant from beneath his rug, that he had no immediate intention of refilling it, congratulated himself on the extinguishment of one of the volcanoes, little thinking what new misery the old man was fishing out of one of the baskets before him. It came in the shape of a broken egg-cup and a black bottle, which evidently contained rum, as the powerful odour of the spirit soon 'o'ercrowed' the tobacco and pervaded the carriage. Jack had a pardonable horror of that popular nautical spirit ever since his adventure at the 'Pickled Herring,' and by a quick association of ideas, he instantly recalled his mud-bath, his rescue, and subsequent scrap-

ing and ablution in the kitchen, his frowzy bed and horrible rum-and-water treatment; the exploits of Dick Turpin and Jack the Pirate; the terrific incidents of the 'Tales of Terror'; the price of coals; and the number of pots of beer contained in a hogshead.

Those pleasures of memory, however, were of short duration, as the old seaman (having filled the egg-cup and offered it to the girl, who took a modest sip of the contents), reached across his younger companion and proffered the cup to Jack, who politely declined the dram. The old man was not to be so easily denied, and after two or three refusals on the part of Jack, appealed to his gallantry and nationality by hoping 'he wouldn't object to the cup after a lady, unless he was too proud to drink with an old salt who could pay his way, and didn't care for no man as wasn't a man.'

There was no resisting such an appeal, as refusal would appear to be a slight to the pretty girl in the corner, and an offence to the rough old fellow who made the request, and who did not seem likely to put up with an indignity very quietly; Jack, therefore, took the egg-cup, bitterly regretting the economy which had placed him in such company.

The rum was new and strong, and Jack had great difficulty in swallowing it; but having done so, and shaken hands with the liberal donor, he was delighted to find, shortly afterwards, that the liquor had had the effect of allaying his previous discomfort, and rendering him less obnoxious to the powerful fumes of the tobacco smoke which the younger seaman continued to emit in clouds. Jack rearranged his rug and commenced counting the telegraph posts as they became visible in the light cast upon them from the carriage windows,—a very sedative employment, as every one must have discovered who has tried the experiment.

Time and the train passed very rapidly, and Jack was surprised to find that they had reached Blankton station, but by no means gratified when told that they must alight, as the accumulated snow made further progress impossible until the line was cleared.

The authorities at the station had done their best to alleviate the discomfort consequent upon the disaster, and the passengers were shown into a large room garnished in the most approved Christmas fashion, and in which an abundance of Christmas cheer was laid out for their entertainment. Jack and his party occupied one end of the table, but there

was a confusion among the other passengers for which Jack could not account—neither could he discover much flavour in the mince-pies, which, resembling in size and conformation those delicacies made by aunt Hester, wanted all their other gratifying properties. The attendants were the railway porters, who, considering the novelty of their duty, appeared to discharge their ministrings with much tact and readiness.

By degrees the room was deserted by all the passengers except Jack, the two seamen, and the pretty girl who accompanied them; and he was not surprised, therefore, when he saw the porter putting out the lights and heard the station-master announce that the waiting-room must be cleared for the night. Jack's companions took the matter so easily that he was ashamed to make any remonstrance, and, therefore, he went out with them, feeling strangely indifferent as to where they were to pass the remainder of the night.

The seamen and the young girl were evidently acquainted with the locality, as they strode away briskly over the snow, now hardened by a sharp frost, which had succeeded the fall, and Jack thought he could not do a wiser thing than keep in their company.

At last they came to a house lighted partially from within, and resembling, strangely enough, the 'Pickled Herring' externally. Without waiting to knock, the whole party entered and found themselves in a large room, also decorated for Christmas time, and wherein burned a bright fire, as though to give them welcome. The house appeared to be in charge of one of the railway porters, as the only person to receive them was a man dressed in the uniform of the company, and who shook them all by the hand, telling them, at the same time, that he had been expecting them since the train had stopped at Blankton station.

When they were seated, the old seaman produced the remainder of his rum and tobacco, and Jack was too glad to renew his acquaintance with the potent spirit, and even to venture on a pipe of tobacco, as his walk over the snow had chilled the marrow in his bones. The soothing influence of the spirit and the narcotic soon displayed themselves on the assembled party, and Jack was glad when the railway porter invited him to go to bed, leading the way up a broad oak staircase, afterwards ushering him into a larger pannelled room, in which was a bed of considerable dimen-

sions, hung with ample curtains of faded chintz, and covered with a railway rug in lieu of a counterpane.

The porter bade him good-night after placing upon the table the bull's-eye lamp, which he had carried instead of a candle, and Jack proceeded to make a survey of his apartment. The floor was of rough, dark boarding, which had sunk here and there under the weight of years, and was not altogether firm beneath his feet. The dark panneling on the walls was cracked and even wanting in places, being entirely without ornament except over the great fireplace, and there hung a rude painting of Dick Turpin in the act of placing an old lady on the fire to make her confess where her money was concealed. In the large grate which occupied the ample chimney a few embers of a wood log smouldered, but there were no materials for continuing or renewing the fire. Jack was less disturbed than might have been supposed by these uncomfortable appearances, until he discovered that the door would not close, and that its large wooden lock was broken, apparently having been forced from without at some time or the other. He was no coward, however, and he had seen nothing which ought reasonably to have given rise to any suspicion of sinister intentions on the part of his new acquaintance; but he determined not to undress himself, but to wrap himself in the rug and lie down outside the bed, placing the bull's-eye lamp on the great arm-chair beside him.

Jack could not sleep, at least not for some time; but he must have dozed, as the room had become perfectly dark, and he had no recollection of the lamp having gone out. As he lay with his eyes wide open, perfectly conscious of his situation and of all about him, a light from without defined the outline of the door, and streamed through the large keyhole in the great lock. Before he could rise from the bed or make an inquiry, the door was opened very gently, and the young girl entered his room as noiselessly as a ghost. She carried a bull's-eye lamp, and when the light fell upon her face he saw that she was very pale, and her eyes appeared to be red with weeping.

Jack Tracey instantly rose up, but before he could speak the girl motioned him to be silent, and then retracing her steps very cautiously to the door, closed it nearly.

Again approaching Jack, she said, in a low sorrowful voice, 'Mr. Tracey' (he wondered how she had learned

his name) — ‘Mr. Tracey, no doubt you are surprised to see me here, and at such a time; but I am in great trouble, and you, I think, will not hesitate to befriend me if I can show you the way.’

‘Pray consider me devoted to your service,’ replied Tracey, not knowing what else to say.

‘I have heard something to-night which will almost kill me if it be true, and I must learn the truth at once. May I ask you to come with me—come with me out of this house? All are asleep but ourselves, and you can do what I now require of you and what else I may call upon you to do, without fear of detection, if we are careful and silent.’

Jack Tracey expressed his ready compliance with her request, and the girl having silently opened the door again, cast her light round the landing disclosing a long passage which Jack had not seen before, and then led the way down stairs to a door which opened into an enclosure at the back of the house, apparently secured from observation by a high wall on either side.

The moon was shining brightly, throwing the deep shadow of one of the walls upon the white snow; and availing herself of this protection from observation, the girl, closely followed by Tracey, stole stealthily along towards a distant building, which seemed to be a barn. There was a strong wind blowing, though it was not felt in the enclosed space they traversed; but the snow was occasionally scattered from the ridges of the walls and the roof of the building which they were approaching. Tracey fancied he could hear the dashing of waves upon the shore and the moaning of the sea, although he could not account for the proximity of a beach to Blankton.

The girl stopping before a small door at one end of the great building, lifted the wooden latch, showing by the light of her lamp, which she still carried, a small room, in which were two dusty chairs and a table, whilst upon the wall were some bunches of faded holly, brown and shrivelled. After closing the door and setting down the lamp, the girl motioned Tracey to be seated, and then said, in the same low, sorrowful voice in which she had hitherto spoken, and as nearly as Jack could remember afterwards, what follows:—

‘Mr. Tracey, before we proceed further in this night’s work it is necessary that I should tell you my story. The old man with whom you travelled to-

night is my father—my stubborn, unfeeling father. Two years ago my dear mother died in the house we have just left, and there, until that sad time, I had lived all my life. When I was seventeen, I was told that I was very handsome, and my vanity made me believe what was so often repeated to me. My too-indulgent mother was proud of her pretty child, and spared nothing to gratify my love of display and my desire for admiration. I became every day more conscious of my attractions, and delighted to encourage the attentions of the young men of the place, until many, misled by a pretended regard, offered themselves as my lovers, only to be laughed at by me, and to be ridiculed by their rivals. I was that odious, wicked thing called a flirt.

‘There was one, however, whom I did love; oh! how dearly I did not know until it was too late. He believed that I loved him, and bore with my waywardness and unpardonable encouragement of others, sometimes gently reproving me, sometimes avoiding me when his mortification had become extreme and his earnest love apparently despised. A word or a smile from me would always bring him back again, and during one repentant interview I exchanged with him a token that we were some day to be married to each other. I will not say I ever sincerely regretted making that engagement, but such was my waywardness, that at times I have resented some fancied control of me which he appeared to assume, and have caused pain to his loving heart, which I would now give worlds to know had never been.

‘One Christmas Eve we had a merry-making in our humble way, and he was kept away by an unavoidable cause. The young man whom you have seen to-night had been a suitor to me, and never ceased to press his attentions upon me whenever we met. He was a favourite of my father, and so was present on that miserable evening. He took more than one occasion, before our friends, to jeer me on the absence of his rival. I was greatly mortified, my foolish vanity was hurt at the appearance of neglect; I thought I had a right to command my lover’s presence; and at last I denied that the absent man had any reason to call himself my lover. The man you saw to-night had become aware, by some means unknown to me, of our exchange of tokens, and challenged me with wearing the gift I have mentioned. In my wicked rage—my shameful weakness—I took the token

from my bosom and threw it upon the floor, stamping upon it, and declaring, in a passion of excitement, that I never would speak to him again or see him more.

'When I recalled the words I had uttered, as I lay sleepless upon my bed that wretched night, I did not believe that they were to prove so true,—so very true!'

The young girl covered her face with her hands, but the tears stole from beneath them and fell upon her bosom. Tracey tried to speak to her, but the power of utterance seemed to have left him. When the girl could regain command of herself she continued—

'Some one told him all that had passed, and when he heard it he never uttered one reproachful word. He merely said, "God forgive her!" and went away. What my own sufferings were none knew beside myself, for I was too wicked to acknowledge my fault—too proud to ask his forgiveness! I did never see him more! He went away—to sea, I was told—and from that hour no word of him has reached me, until this night.

'I was not to escape the consequences of my sin, for as such I soon regarded what I had done. I was overtaken by a settled melancholy, which I could not conceal nor master. I wasted away until it was thought that my death was certain. And then my dear mother also paid the penalty of her over-indulgent love, and my sufferings became hers, for when it was needful that a nurse should be with me night and day, she would not allow a stranger to undertake the duty, but watched and waited with such constancy, that when I was saved my mother died.'

She took from her bosom a wedding-ring, which was fastened round her neck by a black ribbon, and kissed it, weeping and sobbing violently.

At length she resumed :

'The young man who travelled with us has again proposed to marry me, although he knows I have no love to give him. My father has listened to his proposal, and insists upon my accepting him as my husband, declaring that he himself intends to go again to sea, and, therefore, I shall need a protector. But if what I have heard to-night be true, no power on earth shall force me to obey him. If I could have brought myself to have acted such a miserable lie as to have stood at the altar and become his wife, it would have been only to have escaped from my father's brutal anger and perpetual reproaches—no other course

being open to me. If, however, what we are about to see and know be as I have heard, I will not do it! I will not do it!'

She looked upward as she said this, holding her closed hands above her head, her face becoming as white and rigid as marble.

Tracey was greatly perplexed by what he saw and heard, but he could not speak to her, and felt as though a hand grasped his throat to keep him silent.

The young girl now rose up, and, after trimming the lamp, motioned with her head that they must be going. Tracey's bold heart beat quickly and cold drops of sweat stood upon his forehead. He followed his guide, however, who passed—he could hardly perceive how—through an opening out of the little room into a large chamber—a barn it might have been, but the sides and roof were concealed under holly boughs and other evergreens tied together with black ribbon. In the centre of the chamber an object was lying covered by a white cloth and lighted by some concealed means which made even the texture of the cloth distinctly visible. The young girl paused for a few moments by the side of the concealed object, and then slowly removing the covering, disclosed the body of a young sailor neatly clothed in the dress of a man-of-war's-man, but having entangled among his hair and strewn about him clusters of seaweed, shining as though fresh from the sea.

The young girl appeared to be prepared for this strange revelation, and for a few moments she stood motionless and tearless, looking upon the only one she had ever truly loved. At last she bent over her dead lover and kissed the cheeks, the forehead, and lips; but her feelings becoming too excited for control, she threw her arms around the senseless form and cried bitterly.

When this passion of grief had subsided, she raised her head, shaking aside the long curls which had fallen about her face, and said, in a tone of exquisite sweetness—

'O true lover! You have come back to one who drove you forth to shipwreck and to death! You have come back to claim your bride, and will take me with you whether your grave be in the churchyard or beneath the waves of the deep sea.' She then beckoned the astounded Tracey to her, and placed in his hand her mother's wedding-ring which she had worn about her neck, saying,—





from my bosom and threw it upon the floor, stamping upon it, and declaring, in a passion of excitement, that I never would speak to him again or see him more.

"When I recalled the words I had uttered, as I lay sleeping upon my bed that wretched night, I did not believe that they were to prove so true,—so very true!"

"The young girl covered her face with her hands, but the words came from her mouth then and felt upon her bosom. Trancy tried to speak to her, but it proved of uttermost availlessness. "How I'll love you!" she said again, and continued to repeat the words.

"How can I tell her all that I feel, and when he said it he would have said one wonderful word. He merely said, 'and to give her!' and went away. What my own feelings were some knew better myself, for I was too wicked to acknowledge my feelings, too proud to ask an acknowledgment. I did never see him more. He went away—to God, I was told—and from that hour the word of him has haunted me until this night."

"I was not to escape the consequences of my sin, for as such I shall remember what I had done. I was overtaken by a mortal malady, which I could not conquer nor cure. I passed away and it was thought that my death was sudden. And then my dear mother also was taken suddenly at her own independent love, and my sufferings became more horrible. It was needed that I should be with me night and day, and would not allow a stranger to undertake the duty, but watched and waited with such constancy, that what I was owed my mother died."

"She laid down her head in a coffin, which was placed around her head by a black ribbon, and closed it, weeping and sobbing violently."

"At length she recovered."

"The young man who had died, when he was up to his eyes in grief, although he knew I have no love to give him. My father was inclined to his proposal, and means upon my keeping him as my husband, declaring that he himself desired to possess me, and, therefore, I must need a promise. Let it what I have found to-night be true, no power on earth shall force me to obey him. I'll hold him brought myself to have acted such a mean-like life as to have stood at the altar and become his wife, it would have been only as have escaped from my father's brutal anger and perpetual reproaches—no other course

being open to me. If, however, what we are about to see and know be as I have heard, I will not do it! I will not do it!"

"She looked upward as she said this, holding her closed hands above her head, her face becoming as white and rigid as marble."

"Trancy was greatly perplexed by what he saw and heard, but he could not speak to her, and felt as though a hand grasped his throat to keep him silent."

"The young girl rose one up, and, after standing for some minutes with her head thus bent down to getting Trancy's bold heart beat quickly and cold shivers of disquietude upon his forehead. He believed her to be in a swoon, and he passed—how could he pass her—through an open door of the little room into a better chamber—where it might have been, but the night and roof were crowded under belly length and other compresses laid together with black ribbon. In the center of the chamber an object was lying covered by a white cloth, and flanked by some damaged boxes which made with the bottom of the cloth distinctly visible. The young girl passed for a few moments by the side of the covered object, and then, as if carrying the covering, disclosed the body of a young man, neatly clothed in the dress of a soldier-servant, but having retained master's hair and dressed about him, as if of some good station, as though from him the

"The young girl appeared to be surprised by the strange revelation, and it is a few minutes ago stood motionless and motionless looking upon the only one she had ever truly loved. At last she bent over her dead lover and kissed the cheeks, the forehead, and lips; but her change from living to the dead, the shock her eyes around the motionless face and motionless body."

"When this position of grief had subsided, she raised her head, shaking aside the long curls which had fallen about her face, and said, in a tone of languid sweetness—

"O true love! You have come back to me who drive you forth to shipwreck and death! You have come back to claim your bride, and will take me with you whether your grave be in the churchyard or beneath the waters of the deep sea." She then beckoned the prostrated Trancy to her, and placed in his hand her mother's wedding-ring which she had worn about her neck, saying,—



"I marry," said Jack, "This man's maid. I don't want to marry!"

See "Christmas Eve in a High Town."

Drawn by George Cruikshank.



'Take that cold hand, and between its thumb and finger place this, my mother's ring.'

Tracey obeyed her, having seemingly lost all free will.

'Now put the ring upon my finger as he might have done had not my wickedness driven him away to shipwreck and to death! To shipwreck and to death!'

Again Tracey endeavoured to obey her, but the ring fell from his fingers, and before he could regain it, the noise of approaching numbers was heard, and he looked to the quarter whence the noise proceeded. He then became confused or overpowered by what was passing around him, and fancied that the dead man raised himself upon one hand, and opening his closed lids, looked at the young girl with such loving eyes that all which would otherwise have been terrible in the action was absent!

What succeeded to this strange scene was equally surprising!

The chamber was suddenly occupied by the two seamen and their friends, who seized upon the young girl and Jack as though they were about to take summary vengeance on both of them. During the hubbub which succeeded, the bier and its burthen were removed. At one end of the chamber appeared an altar, hitherto unperceived by Tracey, and standing within the rails a venerable clergyman in a snow white surplice. On one side of Tracey was the old seaman supported by many of his friends, rough, pirate-looking fellows armed with bludgeons, and on the other side the young girl, downcast and silent.

'What do you require of me?' asked the clergyman, in a gentle voice.

'This your reverence,' replied the old seaman. 'This fellow (pointing to Tracey) has inveigled my daughter from my house, and as this young man behind me won't marry her on account on it, I require that the other one does.'

'Who? I marry,' said Jack. 'The man's mad! I don't want to marry! Besides the thing is impossible—No banns, no licence!'

'By an old canon of the church,' said the clergyman, speaking more gently even than before. 'By an old and somewhat obsolete canon of the church, I can dispense with either preliminary, and if you will take your places and say after me, the ceremony can be performed in five minutes.'

Jack's head spun round as he felt himself forced towards the altar, but he struggled manfully to free himself from the crowd about him.

The young girl uttered a piercing scream, then another, and another! until Jack began to recognise the steam whistle of the locomotive, and was delighted to discover the old seaman rubbing his eyes with the back of a great worsted muffatoo and the young girl snoring gently, musically in her corner. The other man—possibly having been left in charge of the rum and egg-cup—had fallen forward quietly enough, and buried his head among the bundles and baskets.

'O Aunt Hester! Aunt Hester,' thought Jack, 'those treacherous, though delicious mince-pies of yours! What a pretty dance they have led me through the Land of Dreams! If ever I eat more of them than—I can get, or drink bad rum even on compulsion, may I be haunted as I have been this Christmas Eve by memories of Dick Turpin, Jack the Pirate, and Tales of Terror!'

Jack Tracey reached his home in safety, and being laid up on Boxing day with a bilious attack, wrote his aunt Hester a letter containing his adventure on Christmas Eve when he was a passenger by the night train. From that letter this veritable story has found its way into 'London Society.'

MARK LEMON.



## CHRISTMAS BELLES.

'WE shall be delighted to see you,' says Mrs. Chilberlayne (it is pronounced Chilblayne, contracted), 'and pray, Mr. Pytcher, bring any one you like—married or single—we shall be most happy to welcome them.'

So Pytcher professed himself under a great obligation to Mrs. Chilberlayne for her 'kind invitation,' and promised to bring as many dancing males and females as he could possibly muster for the occasion.

Pytcher being a bachelor, is not in the habit of giving 'mixed' parties himself, nor is it to be expected of him; but Pytcher's friends do it, so to speak, for him; and Pytcher, it appears, always has a stock of people on hand, ready at the shortest notice, for a ball, a conversation, a music party, or, in fact, any social gathering whatever. 'They are always what is termed 'good' people; not especially in point of morals, though doubtless 'honest as this world goes.' But they are presentable, and having met them overnight, you would feel inclined to nod to them next morning, or no objection would be made to them, individually or collectively, if Pytcher ever volunteered to bring them to one of your own evenings at home. Pytcher is not a rich man, but Pytcher has power; he holds, as it were, the keys of certain drawing-rooms, whose thresholds, I am not ashamed to own, I myself have crossed under the protecting charm of Pytcher. But I will keep my Pytcheriana until such time as his portrait, by Scumble, B.A., appears at the Academy's annual exhibition, and a printed copy from a photograph, by kind permission of Monsieur Lens, the eminent professor of this ingenious process, shall appear in these very pages. For the present, I will merely observe, that if ever there was a knowing card in society's pack, that card is little Pytcher. Is there a scandalous report, quite new, hardly breathed on the steps of a club, little Pytcher's long ears have caught it, and from that moment, Pytcher, and Pytcher alone, knows the only full, true, and particular account of the transaction. Stop! I have already said enough of Pytcher. The mercurial little gentleman, on receiving the invitation above recorded, came to call upon me.

'Mrs. Chilberlayne,' says he, puffing a cigarette, which he has carefully and neatly rolled for himself with peculiar tobacco out of a peculiar pouch, which has a peculiar history to it, I've no

doubt, 'Mrs. Chilberlayne has given me *carte blanche* to ask whom I like. Have you got any people you want to do a turn to, eh?

'Well,' I reply, 'I don't think that any of the men I know would care about that sort of thing.'

'It's to be a dance, my boy,' cries little Pytcher. 'The light fantastic toe, trip it merrily, and all that sort of thing! oh no! none of your weak negus, and thin biscuits, and a toone on the grand pianny.' Here the little man cuts a caper on the hearthrug.

'Oh! a dance is it?' I say. 'That alters the question.'

'Quite so,' returns Pytcher. 'Now, if you know any nice girls, married or single, I'll give you your invitations.'

Now, I *do* know a number of nice people, and there are a great many among them to whom I should like, above all things, to send an invitation of this sort; but if my life depended upon it, I cannot recollect their names. My memory is a most treacherous one; faces I can, so to speak, carry in my head; they are retained in my mind's eye; but names and dates have been a grief and a worry to me, ever since I tried to learn a chronological arrangement of all the important events in the history of the Jews; and having for the time, with great trouble, mastered *that*, was forced by an injudicious teacher, to follow it up with a similar table of the History of England. Somehow or other, I never could keep Wycliffe out of the Babylonish captivity, and to this day I have an indistinct notion that the destruction of Jerusalem was somewhere about 1567, that the Temple was rebuilt by Henry VIII., and that the Reformation was brought about by the marriage of Herod the Great and Anne Boleyn. Names, therefore, I cannot recollect.

'Look over a Court Guide,' suggests Pytcher. Capital notion, if we had a Court Guide, but we haven't. What shall we do? Pytcher has it: not the Court Guide, but the notion for getting us out of the difficulty. Bring out the photographic book and consult that. Here it is.

'I know that cheerful party in spectacles,' says Pytcher, pausing at the third portrait, after we had checked off number one, Miss Sheepshanks, as 'eligible,' and number two as 'ineligible,—ringlets objected to.'

'She was,' continued Pytcher, 'the object of a romantic attachment on my part.





CHRISTMAS TREES

Drawn by Annals Horton

See page 11





CHRISTMAS BELLES.

Drawn by Adelaide Clayton.

See page 10.



'You may recollect,' Pytcher goes on to say, while twiddling his third cigarette, 'a sweet picture in the Academy two years ago, called *The Forsaken One*. You don't? Well, there was a lovely girl, you know, with her hair down; beautiful golden hair it was; she was seated at a window, gazing sadly at a highly coloured, sunset tinted landscape. She had on a coarse, stuff dress. That and the carpet were the two great points in the picture. The texture of both was wonderfully brought out. But this was not what touched me. I am very susceptible of tender impressions, and this poor girl wore a sweet and smile, that went right through my upper and under waistcoat straight to my heart. On referring to the catalogue, I found that the artist was a young lady; at least I discovered that it was a lady, and I concluded that she must be young. Your friend and Pytcher is imaginative, perhaps, but not logical, I dare say; no matter. Yes, thought I, she has depicted herself and her own sufferings. *The Forsaken One* haunted me. On the pretence that I wanted to buy the picture, I obtained her address. I sought her out; she lived near Bryanston Square. I felt that I could love her; I felt—in fact, I felt that I could make a regular donkey of myself, if she was only anything like that creature on the canvas. How I trembled as I entered the studio. There was only an elderly female there, of a rather grubby appearance. This, I said to myself, is the mixer of colours; the fair creature does not condescend to such menial employment. Aloud, I told her that I had called to see Miss Scumble.'

'I am Miss Scumble,' said the elderly person simply.

'Whereupon I merely said Oh! and must have shown my disappointment in my face.'

'She keeps house for her brother Scumble, R.A.,' I informed Pytcher.

'Who,' says he, 'is going to paint my portrait for nothing. He says I've got a deuce of a good forehead. I don't know much about these things, but he does say so.'

'I dare say the Scumbles would like to go to the party.'

'By all means,' I say, and we check off the Scumbles, 'eligible.'

'Number four. Young lady; brunette, I should think, and in a pork-pie hat. How much for the lady in the pork-pie hat? Going to the party—going—gone—gone—out of town, I fear.'

'Who is she?' says Pytcher; 'I know the face.'

'A flirt; a downright flirt,' his friend is obliged to confess. 'She's been engaged about twelve times,—has Miss Flick.'

'Weren't you going to marry the Flick at one time?' asks Pytcher carelessly.

'Yes,' I answer, with equal carelessness. You see, the affair has been 'off' so long, that I can now laugh at myself as somebody else. In the history of the past we do appear as somebody else, generally speaking; and in affairs of the heart one is 'not oneself' after all.

Yes, Kitty Flick was, is, will be, a regular flirt to the end of the chapter. And I trust, with all my heart and soul, that the end of the chapter may not be a mournful one. Yet what is to be predicted concerning the future of a girl whose hourly pastime is playing at making 'love, trifling with sincere affection, making cynics of honest trusting youth, and deceiving herself no less than those whom she takes pleasure in deceiving. I am not for dealing lightly with a flirt. I hate and detest flirtation: for by the term, as I understand it, is meant, in so many plain words, dissimulation, treachery, falsehood, and heartlessness. Don't tell me of a 'harmless flirtation.' There is no such thing. If it is a flirtation, it can not be harmless; and if it is harmless, it is not a flirtation. You see, I speak severely. Have I not suffered? Oblige me by glancing at that flowing veil, at that coquettish little hat. You'll scorch your wings, my dear moth, in the fire of that eye, and be laughed at, in your agony, by that wicked little mouth. I have heard the tenderest professions pronounced by those lips, and believed them too; that's the worst of it. I have heard the most cruel, cutting, careless words issue from those lips, and could scarcely believe them. You may have met her at any watering-place, as I did this summer; you will meet her going the same round for any number of summers to come. She'll never die of palpitation of the heart. She has been brought up by a foolish, fond, chatting, old mother, over whom she has absolute power. They quarrel and fight when they're alone, these two, then kiss and make it up again; and after the reconciliation, Miss Kitty is a greater tyrant than ever. Mrs. Flick uses hard words about her daughter, and bemoans her conduct to some confidential gossip; but she will not allow anyone, except herself, to abuse her daughter. Well, well, we don't even bow when we meet now.

Ptycher listens to the story, and says he'd rather like to know her; but 'tis evident we can't invite her. Ptycher seems to think that it is in his destiny to subdue this damsel. All I can say is, I pity Ptycher if he ever makes the attempt.

Now for number five.

'I like that style of doing the hair,' says my friend; 'there's a sort of a, I don't know exactly what about it that—'

The remainder of the sentence is conveyed in a look of silent admiration.

'Yes, she'll come,' I observe; 'if her husband will let her.'

'Husband!' cries Ptycher; 'why, you don't mean to say—'

'I do though. She married an elderly gentleman, old enough to be her grandfather. He doesn't care about balls and parties himself, with the exception of dinner parties; but being a kindly old boy, he lets his Alice go to them, because, as he will tell you, she is so very fond of dancing.'

'Look! she's just fitting on her glove. I warrant her card is full for the evening; and I can't help thinking that her cousin's name, Harry Marsden, a good-looking young Government clerk, appears more than once in the list. Old Baubel, that's her husband's name, is very partial to young Marsden, and so is Mrs. Baubel, for the matter of that. Was it a love match? Well, my dear Ptycher, not exactly. Mrs. Baubel was a Miss Tomkins. The Tomkinses were poor, and Alice was to have been a governess, or a teacher of music, or something of that sort. She has had an excellent education. She was very much attached to Master Marsden at one time, but the old Tomkinses couldn't take that young gentleman at his own valuation, and when old Benjamin Baubel expressed himself delighted with Miss Tomkins's singing and playing, and asked leave to call at the house, Mrs. Tomkins felt that the time was come when Alice must be talked to seriously about Harry Marsden. There were a great many tears shed. But Harry went abroad for a holiday; he needed relaxation sadly; government clerks do sometimes, and—and—when he returned, he found a neat little glazed envelope on his table enclosing the cards of Mr. and Mrs. Baubel, formerly Miss Alice Tomkins. The Baubels are very happy; she lives luxuriously, and does not forget to provide for her relatives. The general opinion is that she is a very sensible woman. I have heard somebody say that they manage these things better in

France. Do they? Ptycher's opinion coincides with this. But I beg to differ, *in toto*, with Ptycher.

Number six?

'Is Mrs. Baubel's sister; they call her Lily. Alice chaperons her everywhere. Shall we check them off?'

'By all means; and I'll write'to the old boy—I mean Mr. Baubel.'

Ptycher intimates his desire to be introduced to Mrs. Baubel at my earliest convenience. I don't like Ptycher's manner this morning. He is a small man, and these small men are all so confidently conceited. If Ptycher doesn't think himself a lady-killer of the deepest dye, the dog! my name's not what it is. I shake my head at Ptycher, who says, 'No, 'pon his honour.' Howbeit he smirks and smiles confidently as he rolls his sixth cigarette. Number seven doesn't interest him much. This is a very good child: she is an orphan, reared in a convent by some excellent Sisters of Charity—that is their name, I believe—who want to procure for her an under-nursemaid's place in a good family. Ptycher says that he doesn't know anything about under-nursemaids; but, by the way, he remembers that a friend of his has a deuced pretty—I stop Ptycher at this point, and all that remains for him to add is, that he mistrusts demure looks, generally speaking. He is good enough to say, however, that he'll ask Mrs. Chilverlayne if she wants anything of the sort, as the girl might help in the tea and coffee line, by way of introduction at the coming festival. So he makes a note of it, and that's settled.

'That's Miss Chirpington,' says Ptycher, alluding to number eight. 'She's always asked everywhere on account of her voice; and by way of increasing the value of her performance, she always puts her hand to her throat, gives a little faint cough, and pleads a slight cold. I don't think she cares about dancing, as she cannot, in that case, command sufficient attention; but we may check her off. Number eight, eligible.'

Number nine is a cousin of mine. Her name? Gracious! I shall forget my own presently. Dear me! She's still at school: such an earnest *spirituelle* little girl as she is, it's a treat to converse with her, for she can converse, and cleverly too. She'd pose you, Ptycher.

Ptycher says he dares say she would. He hates clever school misses.

'Ah!' I explain, 'Ellen has stayed beyond her time at school—she's just seventeen—because her parents have



been in India. But they'll soon be at home again now, and then she says she'll dance her first valse with me at her first ball.'

'Ah! then she won't do for the Chilberlaynes.'

'No, she won't do for that at present; but when you've got another *carte blanche*, just let me know.'

'Here's a pretty little creature,' cries Pytcher.

I tell him it is my niece; on which Pytcher rudely remarks that she is so good-looking he mistrusts the relationship. Ten is her number, and ten is her age.

'And,' says Pytcher, 'ten is her bedtime, I'll be bound, unless long before that hour she's fast asleep, as she ought to be. Children ought never to stop up late; they're a nuisance at any time; but a semi-sleepy nuisance is detestable. I've got some nephews and nieces, horrid little creatures. Whenever I call on their mamma they play tricks with my hat, and hide my umbrella. There's nothing I abominate so much as any one who plays tricks with my hat, and takes any liberties with my umbrella. They filled the latter with sawdust the other day; and when it came on to rain, and I hurriedly put it up in the street, I was drenched in a perfect shower-bath of sawdust. No children admitted.'

'Hallo!' cries Pytcher, 'here's a crab-apple sort of face.'

'Which?'

'This,' says he; 'this sour old spinster—for spinster she is, I'll swear: a thoroughly scandalous tittle-tattling old maid.'

With some show of dignity, I inform him that that lady whom he is abusing is my aunt.

Pytcher says, 'Is it?' But as he would rather die than retract his observations, he adds, with great *sang froid*, 'Well, I was right; she is a spinster, isn't she?'

'Yes, she is, of an uncertain age, and very rich. She wears gloves all the morning, and is great at preserves, pickles, homoeopathic medicines, and a conservatory. The poor people come to her for advice when they are unwell; and as she invariably accompanies her receipts with some more substantial gift by way of gilding the globe, you may imagine that there is a good deal of sickness in her immediate neighbourhood. She smiles sweetly on the curate, and asks him for his solution of all her theological difficulties. She is strongly inclined towards the evangelicals, and takes the first class at the Sunday School. She has a parrot that talks, a bullfinch that pipes the fragment of a tune, when you waggle your head in front of the cage for five minutes at a time, and a small King Charles with a bell round its neck, who is friendly with no one save his mistress and the footman. Her portrait represents her as smiling more in sorrow than in anger. That, my dear Pytcher, would be her expression of countenance, were I to propose her appearance at Mrs. Chilberlayne's ball.'

And thus we've got through the list. Pytcher's tenth cigarette is finished, his stock of tobacco has failed him, I can offer him none, and his visit comes to an end.

'We shall meet at the Chilberlayne's, then,' says he, 'and even if none of the fair creatures accept, we haven't quite wasted our half-hour in ringing the changes on these "Christmas belles."'

F. C. B.



## CHRISTMAS EVE AT THE OLD HALL.



WE crowd around the Christmas fire  
That blazes in the hall,

The great yule logs we heap up higher—  
They 'crackle' to our heart's desire,

And shine bright on the wall.

How warm we feel within—without,  
The night wind blows the trees about,  
And thick the snowflakes fall.

The children's eyes grow round and bright,

Fatigue they cannot know;

They shout aloud with all their might—

'Hurrah! 'tis Christmas Eve to-night,

We wish 'twould never go!'—

Then quick they to the windows rush,

'The "waits," the "waits!"—and all is "hush,"

Save footfalls through the snow.

We watch them come with heavy tread,

The snow blows in each face;

Their noses and their ears are red,

Each hat is tied about the head

To keep it in its place.

The children laugh—they look so queer,

Their comforters up to each ear,

No enviable case.

At first a few faint quavering notes,

The night air bears along;

(The snow had got into their throats—)

But soon the strain more smoothly floats,

Harmoniously and strong;

For driving snow and frosty air,

They do not seem a bit to care,

While carolling this song:—

**Carol.**

- ' Hail! to this happy Christmas-tide,  
The crown of all the year;  
When every heart beats high with joy,  
And every voice rings clear.
- ' When holly decks the old church walls  
With berries bright and red;  
And in each home the mistletoe  
Hangs clustered overhead.
- ' All discord, strife, and envying '  
Throughout the land must cease;  
This joyous Christmas time proclaims  
" Goodwill on earth and peace."
- ' All sorrow, grief, and misery  
Each home must put away,  
And only thankful love prevail  
This dawning Christmas Day.
- ' " Goodwill to men," the angels sang  
From out their home of glory,  
When to the shepherds long ago  
They told their wondrous story.
- ' " And peace on earth—" more loud and sweet,  
Swelled forth the angels lay,  
" To you is born the Prince of Peace,  
This bright, glad Christmas Day!"
- ' Then hail with songs this happy time  
That celebrates such joy,  
And let each heart full measure take  
Of bliss without alloy.
- ' Ring out, ring out, glad Christmas bells!  
The Eve is well-nigh gone;  
Clash iron tongues from every fane,  
And ring in Christmas morn.'
- The ' waits ' have ceased their carol sweet,  
And from the old church tower  
The clock strikes out with measured beat,  
Twelve times it doth the shock repeat  
That telleth forth the hour;  
And then deep silence—like a spell,  
We heard the snowflakes as they fell,  
In soft unbroken shower.
- Sweet solemn stillness, broken now  
By every childish tongue,  
And then succeeds one ceaseless flow  
Of ' Happy Christmas! ' high and low;  
From voices loud and strong.  
Round ' grandpapa ' with clam'rous din'  
They cry—: Do have the poor " waits " in,  
They've felt the cold so long!

*Christmas Eve at the Old Hall.*

The kind old squire, so good to all,  
Flings wide the open door,  
And has the men brought in the hall,  
Where standing by the garnished wall,  
The snow melts on the floor.  
But all is jollity and cheer,  
The children hand the hot, spiced-beer  
And huge mince-pies to all.

Hark! what a joyous peal of bells  
Rocks on the cold night breezes!  
Oh, happy sound, what joy it tells,  
How musically sweet it swells,  
Across the snow-spread leas!  
'A merry Christmas to us all,'  
The children shout from wall to wall,  
'And more mince-pies like these!'

The 'waits' have had their Christmas meal  
And 'jerked' their parting bow;  
Their shy, bright faces quite reveal  
The comfort and the joy they feel  
In broad and radiant glow;  
And through the open door they file,  
The joy-bells clashing out the while,  
And bravely breast the snow.

We turn within the cheerful hall,  
And round the yule-fire stand—  
The bright light glances on the wall,  
'Good-night, good-night!' cries one and all,  
The joyful little band.  
'Good night?—good morning, you should say,'  
Laughs 'grandpapa!' 'tis Christmas Day—  
Young folks, you understand!

Though loath to leave the genial fire,  
We quit the lighted hall,  
The clanging bells with wild desire  
Peal out from ivied tower and spire,  
With eager rise and fall.  
I linger on the broad oak stair,  
'A happy Christmas' is the prayer  
I breathe for each—for all.

H. M.



## 'BLUE BOY,' OR, THE LETTER IN THE GOBLET.

### A Christmas Story.

IT was a brown November day. Nature suffered from influenza. She sneezed fitfully a small rain, breathed hard and uncertainly, and was generally chill and discomposed.

About noon, a respectable but ugly dog, of no breed whatever, was seen trotting through the narrow, slushy streets in the neighbourhood of Black-wall. His journey was clearly the result of design. Whatever his end, it was plain that he did not lose sight of that end for a moment. He found it uncomfortable, no doubt, to be encrusted with mud, and to be subjected to all the difficulties of an animated pie attempting locomotion. But neither discomfort nor difficulty could check his steady, persistent trot towards the East India Docks.

'Possum' felt himself wronged. Why had they not let him come with the carriage to see Blue Boy off? Why should he have been driven to the expedient of slipping his collar at the last moment—a dishonourable as well as a difficult feat to accomplish? Did not 'Possum' take as lively an interest in Blue Boy as anyone? Did he not know (as well as any of the perpendicular animals could) that Blue Boy was going t'other side of the round world, where his legs would be sticking up this way; and that before he could get back, dog-days and sulphurous water must come and go once at least? Why, then, should he be excluded from the privilege of bidding Blue Boy good-bye?

As 'Possum' trotted across the open space which lies between the Black-wall railway station and the river, he raised his nose inquiringly.

'Ocean Ripple' (1200 tons) was being warped out of dock. She was necessarily close alongside the quay. The seamen grouped upon the fore-castle could talk to their weeping friends ashore. 'Possum' stood close to the edge of the quay, regardless of hawsers from which he was in some peril. Suddenly his tail began to wag furiously.

A gold-bound cap appeared above the bulwarks. A sudden strong whistle was heard, and a pair of eyes, staring widely, came in view. Not that Blue Boy saw anything particular, or felt inclined for music. But had he not stared and whistled, his throat might have burst, and certainly something

shining and unsailorlike would have trickled down his cheeks.

An honest Saxon head that was, with its fair hair, wide-sweeping eyebrows, bold prominent chin, and clear day-break eye. A handsome, impudent, funny old head. It belonged to Blue Boy, midshipman (merchant service), aged seventeen.

'My stars!' exclaimed the lad in bassoon-like tone, as he realized 'Possum.' 'And what the dickens brings you, old chap?'

'Possum' understood the question, and replied to it, as it appeared to him, with clearness. It took Blue Boy long, however, to understand the answer. At last he said, 'I know. Come to see me off, eh? Good dog! Now, good-bye, and go home. Love to the governor, and a whole lot of it to Ettie. Don't forget me, 'Possum, when I come back.' And here Blue Boy abruptly disappeared.

'Possum' obeyed, willing, though sad. 'Heaven bless us!' he said to himself, as he jogged home, 'we dogs have our feelings, although men ignore them. That boy now! I'd do anything in the world for him. And yet what a life he has led me! tying every conceivable thing to me that was calculated to alarm or irritate a dog—throwing me most days into the pond, though he knew I hated water like a cat—setting me at harmless kittens which it went against my stomach (or conscience—the two are identical) to interfere with, and at big dogs which it was impossible for me to lick! But he has smelt true through it all; and I'll stick to him. Yes, we have our feelings, we dogs. Forget him? Let's see!'

It was a long way home, but 'Possum' knew the road well, having travelled it two days ago, when Blue Boy came down to look after his chest.

Ettie felt that day, as if her heart had been torn out. She scarcely noticed 'Possum's' return, although her eyes were watching him as he crept round to the stable-yard, looking up at her mutely, to deliver his message. But she stared much out of window in a vague general way, thinking of her father's ward, Blue Boy, and of 'Ocean Ripple,' (1200 tons); thinking, too, sometimes, it was but right that Nature should be holding a damp pocket-handkerchief of fog to her great blue

eye, this day of sad partings—and then growing hot and moist again about her own pretty brown eyes.

Ettie, though only sixteen, was her widower-father's housekeeper. But it was not easy to housekeep now. 'What quantity of coals is to be ordered, please Miss?' She nearly answered, '1200 tons.' In sending certain comforts to an aged invalid in her district, she narrowly escaped telling her page to carry with him 'an experienced surgeon.'

Amidst Ettie's burdensome household duties, Hannah, an old servant, was eminently annoying to her to-day. She continually urged her young lady to 'reconcile herself.' Reconcile herself to what? Impudence! what did Hannah know about it?

This acidulated spinster and Blue Boy had been, from the infancy of the latter, on cat-and-dog terms. She had done her duty by him with spiteful patience while he was at home. But she exulted inwardly now that he was gone. And Ettie knew this, and was afraid that she hated Hannah, as she watched her pungent little face, reminding one somehow, she thought, of the smell of gas.

Papa—lawyer papa, came home as usual to dinner. The evening had no wheels to its chariot. Blue Boy was not there to sing 'Three Fishers,' with effects, nor to play with Ettie the accustomed blundering game of chess in which she would let him have back his Queen as often as he lost it—which was three times at least.

Brown November and hoary December both saw Ettie to disadvantage. But on the twenty-fourth of the latter month her spirits revived. She busied herself in preparing for to-morrow's entertainment with relish. The party would be small. An old-maiden cousin, a bachelor-cousin, papa, and Ettie would constitute it. But all should be perfect in comfort and delicacy, so Ettie determined.

It was a custom in the house, after the Christmas dinner, to fill a silver cup with spiced wine, and to pass it (no matter how many times) round the table, that each might name, and drink to an absent one.

Ettie must bring out the old goblet, never used but for this purpose. She went to the plate closet, thinking of the laughing boy who had drunk out of that cup last year, and had refused to name any absent person, because, as he said, he didn't care a rap for absentees just then. She unfolded the green baize, and took out the goblet.

Why, there was something inside it—a note!

Yes, a note. And directed, too, in that peculiar, satisfactory handwriting, which, as Ettie always thought, looked like something good to eat—directed, moreover, to Miss Violet (*i. e.*, Ettie) Arnold.

Ettie's pretty retromised nose felt white, and her heart beat syncopeated time. She opened the note and read:—

'DEAR MISS VIOLET,

'Did you think the Blue Boy had nothing to say to you before he went away? It happens that he had something to say. But he was in an awful funk of the governor, so he thought he'd write.

'And after all, Ettie knows what he's got to say, so he needn't say it even on paper.

'Wasn't it a good dodge to make a post-office of the Christmas cup? He knew well enough who would be the first to get hold of it! But how did he manage to seize the keys, eh, Miss Ettie?

'Mind whose health you drink! And wear this locket round that soft, white little neck, which I should like to—

'But, Miss Violet; if you don't care about the party whose hair is inside—don't wear the locket pray—on any account. Throw it away, by all means—smash it to atoms—it's all the same to me. And get Mr. Arthur Popinjay Prior (the brute!) to give you another locket instead, with one of his own beautiful black curls in it.

'I am, dear Miss Violet,

'Yours very' (something with two 'Fs' in it scratched out faintly. Then 'sincerely,' struck through with vehement blackness. Nothing else added).  
'(Signed) SEA-WEED.'

'Papa mustn't know,' naughty Ettie thought.

Papa was a wary man, who did not always allow even his petted daughter to see how much he saw. And because he wished the little affair between the young people to take its natural course, and, therefore, appeared to know nothing about it, they imagined him to be ignorant of what was, in fact, as patent as a sunflower.

The Christmas dinner came. Poor homeless cousin Elizabeth, and well-to-do bachelor-cousin Jack seemed to enjoy it equally. The cloth was removed in old style; the mull was brewed and the silver cup charged; papa had begun to introduce his toast:—



'The first name I shall mention—'  
An instant afterwards Ettie was at her father's chair. What had happened in that moment?

The angle of death had laid his hand upon the speaker's lips.

How the Christmas glow suddenly died out of those three faces! That room became as dismal as a grate of dusty, sparkless cinders, as sadly strange as the home of childhood looked at in careworn age.

The front door was open, for some one had run for a doctor. The hall candles flared and trickled into mock stalactites. The icy, winter air came rushing in. Little Ettie stood shivering by the door with clasped hands, trying to be patient. 'Oh! when would he come?'

He came at last: that large grave doctor, with his patient corbel-head, hitherto so impracticable and remote, had suddenly become Violet's close friend. His words were inspired now.

But he could not prophesy smooth things. After one glance at the sofa, his eye commissioned his lips to deliver a fatal message. Mr. Arnold was dying.

An hour more, and he was dead.

And 'Possum, who had been admitted to the kitchen for a Christmas treat, came pattering into the dining-room, and rested his faithful ugly chin on the sobbing girl's knees. She put a hand on his hard head, and said, 'Oh, 'Possum! poor papa is gone, and I am left alone. He will never come back again—never.'

'Possum whined out a solemn oath to stand by Ettie through thick and thin to the last moment of his existence.

Violet had put away the locket now; her heart smote her about it. She ought to have told her father. Oh! she would tell him all now if he could only come back and listen for one minute!

So the Blue Boy's health was not drunk that Christmas after all!

'It becomes our duty, my dear Violet,' said the bland, faltering Mr. Prior, on the afternoon of the funeral, while cousin Jack, his co-guardian and co-executor, looked silently on the floor, 'to acquaint you with the provision made for you and with the plans we have formed as to your home.'

Ettie bent her head, her eyes filling. She looked a fair, frail little sprite in her deep mourning. Good hearty cousin Jack could scarcely trust himself to glance at her. She, however, kept his plain, kindly, sensible face continually in view.

No realized property, but handsome insurance—a probable income for Ettie of three hundred and fifty pounds a year. This was the pith of Mr. Prior's statement, so far as it related to pecuniary

matters. 'And now let me say,' he concluded, 'we think it well that you should for the present take up your residence in my family.'

Ettie broke down here altogether.

'I believe,' added Mr. Prior, appealing to cousin Jack, 'that we are quite agreed on this point?'

Cousin Jack gave a savage nod, and then blew his nose with such a tremendous crack that Mr. Prior jumped, and Ettie left off crying.

'It's best for a while, Ettie,' said cousin Jack, as he left her a week later. 'You will be happiest at the Priors' now, for Katie is your closest friend. But remember, I, too, am your guardian, and we must correspond regularly. You trust your old cousin? (kissing her).'

'Indeed—indeed I do.'

'And love him?' (kissing her again). 'You may confess it to a grey-haired old chap like me.'

She confessed it by returning his salutes with interest.

'Good,' was cousin Jack's acknowledgment. 'Now,' he continued, 'don't think you've lost me—you haven't. I'm at your beck and call always. Good-bye, little miss' (that was his old name for her).

'Good-bye, dear old cousin.'

She had a terrible cry after he was gone.

So the pleasant home at Walthamstow was left. Some of the dear old furniture, which Ettie chose, was kept and put away somewhere; the rest was sold. She went to live at the house of her senior guardian, Mr. Adolphus Prior, solicitor, who resided in Cavendish Square, W. She took with her London Hannah from generosity, and 'Possum out of love.

She was not unhappy in her new home. Although she disliked Arthur Popinjay, she loved Katie; yet for a time she was naturally sad.

At length her little heart began to recover. Insensibly the sunshine crept over her life's prospect. There came a brighter bloom upon that soft girl's cheeks, and the maiden's step regained its elasticity. Ettie took music lessons again as spring came on, reopened her portfolio, and revived her German. Thank God, intense sorrow does not last long with any of us.

But there was one old feeling of her heart which had not waited even *this* short time for restoration. The locket, after all, had only been set aside for two days! The 'Blue Boy,' she often thought of him!

'Blue Boy!' she loved the name. The lad's first new uniform and beaming

young face had put it into her father's head to bestow the title, which was borrowed from a famous picture, as the reader knows.

It suited him, Ettie thought, so well. The colour of far, open sea, and of cloudless skies, spoke truly of his large pure heart. 'Boy' he always must be, 'par excellence.' Noisy, affectionate, old pack of impulses!

Ettie wrote to him in the spring. To her amazement Mr. Prior objected to this. She did not, however, oppose her guardian, except by quietly taking her own way. The letter, for the most part, was not wanting in occult tenderness; but there was a phrase of clear and concentrated savagery at its close. Ettie must be guilty of inflicting just one torment; so she held her pen as though it had been a dagger and scratched a sore place upon Blue Boy's heart in this post-script: 'Arthur, who is sitting near me while I write, desires to be very kindly remembered.'

She never told how impatient she felt at the moment, of Arthur's dandy dress and mean-nothing face, and of all his conventional elegancies, and opinions, and looks, each stolen from some other person. There is, as we all know, peculiar pleasure in driving a virulent sting right into our darling's heart; so Ettie did not tell Blue Boy what she really thought about Arthur Popinjay Prior. How she wished afterwards that she had done so!

Summer declined and 'sea-side' came to be talked of. One morning Ettie came down to breakfast in better spirits than usual. She entered the breakfast-parlour with light step, carelessly humming 'Weel may the keel row.' She was looking forward to Filley and freedom with keen young pleasure. The 'Times' newspaper lay folded upon the table; Ettie took it up, and carelessly ran her eye over the columns, which appeared drier than usual. It was not long, however, before the heading of a paragraph awakened within her a feeling of eager, frightened interest, and bleached her rosy little face into a hue of ghostly hiteness.

#### FIRE AT SEA.

The paragraph thus introduced, ran as follows:—

'Her Majesty's ship "Conqueror," arrived in Plymouth Sound this morning, from the Mauritius, reports the total loss, by fire, of the ship "Ocean Ripple" (Sydney to London), in lat. 42 S., long. 35 E. The "Conqueror" has on board the second mate with ten of the crew belonging to the ill-fated vessel. These

men assert that they were the only survivors.'

Ettie's terrified eyes ran quickly over the dreadful sentence, and then, overwhelmed, the child swooned and fell.

When she came to herself, Arthur supported her head, and was bathing her temples. Assistance from him at this time seemed to aggravate her pain. With what power she could exert, she raised and disengaged herself.

Her appearance at this moment was singular and beautiful. Her eyes, always full of intelligence, shone with a preternatural lustre, as though they were able to discern objects invisible to others. Her brown hair, disordered in her recent swoon, fell a rich wavy cascade over her shoulders. Her cheeks were radiant with a peculiar ghastly pallor.

A wordless stillness, or floods of tears, would now have seemed natural. But the talkative, tearless unrest which Ettie exhibited, was anomalous and alarming. She paced the room quickly, putting into plain words her most distressing thoughts.

'Blue Boy is dead,' she said. 'He was burnt to death or drowned. Nobody was there to comfort him. None of you here understood what we were to each other. No one can console me. He is gone, and I am left alone for ever. Oh! cruel!'

Each in turn attempted to comfort her, but without success. She walked for hours, and would not hear of rest or food.

'He was burnt then,' she repeated a hundred times, 'burnt or drowned. My worst fears have all come true: I am left alone. First mother went—then papa—now Blue Boy! oh! cruel—cruel!'

From that morning there began with Ettie a painful, puzzling dream. Once only—for long long months—she seemed awhile to wake from it. And that was one day when cousin Jack came suddenly into the room with tears filling his big eyes, and when he took her on his knee, as in years before, and kissed her, and put his arm round her waist, and let her head lie upon his shoulder; and when he told her that he did not give up hope yet, and that he believed Blue Boy—the strong, spirited fellow!—would be sure to escape if anyone could, and that it was most likely he had stayed on board to the last, like the brave English boy that he was, and so those who had been in a hurry to avenge their own lives had not known of his safety.

To hear such words seemed like a brief awakening. But the dream returned; and although kind cousin

Jack often afterwards spoke in the same strain, his consolations soon came to be powerless, like all others.

And then all at Mr. Prior's seemed to grow cold towards Ettie. Why was this? Mr. Prior himself, it was true, humoured all her whims, but in a strange and chilling way. Mrs. Prior was continually glancing at her suspiciously, and seldom took notice of her remarks. Katie never came to her room as formerly. What did it all mean? And the dreary, unvaried *obligato* to these enigmatical combinations, was the ever-present thought, 'He is burnt or drowned, and I am left alone.'

The peculiarity of manner towards Ettie increased. Why did every one watch her? Why might she not be allowed to follow her own courses unnoticed, like other people? Why had Hannah left suddenly without wishing her good-bye, and why had a new attendant come—a person with queer, strong manners, who gave her peremptory orders, and would be obeyed?

One warm friend (besides cousin Jack) Ettie had still. 'Possum would come daily and rest his paws and his chin upon her lap, his honest dog's heart full of inarticulate grief and affection. He would look up at her absent eyes, and whine out how much he cared for her, how well he remembered the old days at Walthamstow, when papa and Blue Boy were there, and how he hoped and believed that good times would come back again, although he might not see how it was to be.

Then at last he would win the girl's wandering attention. She would pat him gently and say in a low voice:—'Ah! 'Possum you're left to me still. You're one of the old set. It was Blue Boy himself who found you and brought you home, just because you were so ugly that he thought nobody else would. You mustn't give me up, 'Possum. Whatever happens, keep with me. Keep with me to the last!'

One day a strange gentleman and lady came to Cavendish Square. The former was tall and grave, but apparently gentle and kind. The lady was a thorough lady. Both expressed great interest in Ettie's welfare. This surprised her; but she was destined to be more astonished yet. They begged her to come and pay them a visit. She declined to accept the invitation. She could not, she explained, feel comfortable in going amongst strangers now. But her guardian seconded the proposal himself. It would be so delightful for Ettie, he said, to stay at Mr. Mensfort's lovely place in Wiltshire. The change

was exactly what she needed. She positively must go.

At last she consented. She began at once to prepare for the journey, which would take place the next day. At the appointed hour, Mr. and Mrs. Mensfort called to fetch her. She was ready, and seated herself beside her future hostess, in the comfortable carriage which had been brought to take her to the station.

The carriage door was about to be closed when a sudden scuffling sound was heard in the hall. 'Possum came bounding out across the pavement. In spite of the footman's opposition, he scrambled into the carriage, and took up his station at Ettie's feet.

Mr. Mensfort was sitting opposite to Ettie. Motioning to the footman to offer no hindrance to the dog's remaining, he immediately said:—'An old favourite, Miss Arnold? Well, it's only right that he should come with us.'

'He must come, if I go,' said Ettie. 'I had almost forgotten him, but he doesn't forget me. He is the dog, Mr. Mensfort, that knew papa and Blue Boy. But perhaps you haven't heard—? Papa is dead, and Blue Boy was burnt or drowned at sea. I am left alone, quite alone.'

'Well, my dear young lady,' Mr. Mensfort answered kindly, 'I hope you will find that there are those living yet who love and care for you besides this faithful friend at your feet?'

Ettie shook her head. 'But after all,' she said earnestly, 'death, you know, Mr. Mensfort, takes nothing really away from us. It may make our dear one's into flowers or summer air. But every part of them is still here! You will say "No! their spirits are gone away." But you are wrong. Their spirits are with God. And is not *He* here?'

'True, true,' replied Mr. Mensfort, as the carriage drove off.

Some hours later, Ettie found herself in a chariot more luxurious than that in which she had left her guardian's house, with liveries before and behind her. A short drive in this stately conveyance brought her in sight of a large and handsome mansion.

The carriage swept in at an imposing gateway, with a gothic lodge beside it, and now brought the wondering little traveller into perfect fairyland. Although it was winter, the sloping lawns, and tastefully disposed banks of evergreen, lit up by a rosy evening sunlight, appeared to her enchanting.

Within the house all was as pleasant as around it. Mr. Mensfort's daughters

and some other ladies and gentlemen who appeared to be visiting at Health-field Court, received Ettie with the greatest kindness.

And in this place Ettie stayed on, sadly dreaming out her wonderful, oppressive dream. 'Possum had his kennel here as at home, and often walked with his mistress in the lovely grounds. Somehow they both came to relinquish the idea of going away again. Was not this far better, thought Ettie, than gloomy, smoky London? And if Mr. and Mrs. Mensfort were anxious to keep her—and they assured her that they were so—why should she not remain?

Here she talked with Nature in her sad, daily walks. Here she felt her old love for tracing similitudes between the things that are seen, and those deeper things which are only felt. Here she stayed till the year had arisen from his wintry trance, till violets had shed perfume from amongst the shrubs, till primroses had starred the grassy knolls with golden glory. Here still, she stayed. Wondering, yet acquiescing without deep inquiry. Dreaming sadly out her wonderful oppressive dream.

There came at last a sweet April day, when the maiden earth, in a blush of apple blossom, seemed like a modest bride arrayed for her husband. Small clouds of snowy fairness wreathed the sky, and a magic veil of gauzy mist enhanced the loveliness it softly shaded.

Ettie walked in the beautiful grounds, noting, with a feeling akin to pleasure, the purple iris as it began to push its rich petals through their flat and folded sheath, or the early tulip which painted the well-kept beds with vivid splendours.

She walked long, 'Possum, who by this time was old, keeping at her side. The grind of wheels upon the gravelled drive yonder, presently caught her ear, and she raised her eyes towards the approach to the house, whose nearest point was some hundred yards or so distant from where she stood. A hackney carriage quickly swept round the curve of road visible from her station, and disappeared. Two gentlemen were in it. So much Ettie had time to notice, and no more.

The French windows of the drawing-room, which were now open, faced that portion of the garden where Ettie stood. In a minute or two it became evident that the visitors had entered that room, and were talking there with Mr. Mensfort, or 'the Doctor,' as Ettie had now learned to call him. Having no wish to be observed by the strangers, even

at a distance, Ettie turned her back upon the windows, and began to walk still further from them.

As she did so she was suddenly puzzled and alarmed at the conduct of 'Possum. With a loud yell or whine he left her like a shot. She turned herself once more to discover, if possible, the cause of this unexpected move. But no reason for the dog's departure suggested itself. He ran vehemently till he reached the drawing-room, where he disappeared.

For a few moments Ettie stood gazing after her companion, wondering what might have been his motive for leaving her in this precipitate manner. But she had not long to wait for a solution of the question.

Not many seconds had elapsed before 'Possum reappeared. But he was not alone now.

Heaven! what meant it? this sudden magic vision? this vision of a tall, well-knit, well-remembered boy's figure, of golden hair, and a deep-bronzed face, and glittering buttons?

Ettie stood like a statue; her lips pale and parted; her hands clasped; her heart crammed with a nameless incredulous happiness.

Wonderful. It was no mistake. There he came bounding—bounding towards her, while 'Possum capered and barked a bark of joy before him. Yes, there was the dear old face, all aflame now with passionate love; the eyes burning with an intense pure brightness like electric sparks; the excitement of the countenance enhanced by an indescribable expression of eager, wondering inquiry.

A few moments more, and a great, strong arm was clasping the frail girl's figure; two trembling lips were pressed upon the maiden's cheek; and then, from that true, manly sailor's heart there swelled up such mighty tears as no effort could suppress.

'My own darling,' he said when he could sob out anything like a word. 'You see that I'm all safe and well. I've been in awful peril, but the good God brought me through it. He has sent me back to you, dearest, that I may make you well and happy.'

And as he found his self-possession inclined to return, he hurried it back with all his might. He swallowed, stifled, stared, raised his wide eyebrows, set his small lips in the old decided style, and lifted his shapely chin with the semi-defiant air of years ago. Then he fell to scanning the silent girl's face. As he did so the look of eager inquiry which had characterized

his first gaze at her, gave place to an expression of simple satisfied love.

When she spoke, it was with the greatest calmness.

'Blue Boy,' she said, 'you have come to wake me up from the oddest, ugliest dream I ever had in my life.'

'Yes, my darling. You've been ill, you know, very ill.'

'But I'm perfectly well now. Let me look at you, Blue Boy. How you've grown, but you are not altered a bit otherwise. You are quite as—as—ugly as ever! No whiskers, that's right! God bless those brown cheeks!'

'Bless you, my Violet! But may I call you mine? Will you have me, pretty lass, for your sweetheart?'

'Yes, Blue Boy, I will, because I can't help myself. Your eyes, sir, are forget-me-nots. I thought so long ago, though I never told you. They made me obey their blue command. I have never forgotten them.'

And then he took her round the waist and led her about the garden (which appeared to him to be Eden), and laughed, and half cried again, and said if his great staring eyes were forget-me-nots, he should uncommonly like to know what hers were! And he went on to tell her that she was made of diamonds, and gold, and sunshine, and honey, and harmony. And he said that the bliss of to-day would have made up for ages spent clinging to charred timbers upon a stormy sea; and that he didn't care for anything; and that God was too good; and that the world was the jolliest, happiest place going; and that it was all right; and that (by Jupiter) he'd never swear again nor have another pipe as long as he lived. And he added that Ettie must come away to-day, of course, and that it was all humbug about her being—And such a lot more he said, that we despair of telling it all.

By-and-by he grew quieter, and then Ettie looked up into his face and said,—

'Blue Boy, I know what's been the matter with me.'

'And I know,' he answered, kissing her, 'what's been the matter with me, ever since that gloomy November day that took me away.'

'My mind has been affected,' said Ettie, 'and this is an asylum that I am staying at now. Are you afraid that I shall get wrong again?'

'I'm afraid of nothing. And let me tell you, Ettie, my mind has been affected, and I, too, have found an asylum; but it is one which I have no immediate intention of leaving, although the treatment I have received there has

completely cured me. Here it is,' he added, laying his head upon her bosom.

Ettie smiled with a smile so thoroughly her own, that it was clear enough her cure was in every sense as perfect as Blue Boy's.

'And now, old 'Possum,' said the sailor, as he patted the old dog, 'you deserve a little notice. So you remembered me, as I told you, did you? And you came just now to put an end to the doctor's doubtings and head-shakings, by bringing me direct to my darling? And you took care of her and stuck to her while I was away? A good old dog!'

They patted and fondly caressed him together.

The ugly and aged animal panted out upon his young master and mistress a heart full of love, and thanks, and good wishes; and then, feeling, perhaps, that there was nothing left in this life which he particularly cared to see, or it may be, unable to endure, after his late bodily exertions, the bliss of the moment, he sank upon his side, and stretching suddenly out to an appalling length, while everything belonging to his frame bent in a hideously wrong direction, poor 'Possum took his departure for that land where flies never annoy, where no ghastly moons compel the midnight howl, and where young masters (if, indeed, any in the biped form there exist) are as considerate as they are fond.

The doctor owned to Violet's complete cure. She did not now stay long at Heathfield Court.

That second gentleman who had come with Blue Boy proved to be cousin Jack. Although unable often to bear the sight of poor Ettie while she had been suffering from mental aberration, the kind, good creature had continually been near her. He had never given up his hope that Blue Boy still lived, nor his firm faith that the moment of the lad's restoration to Ettie—if only that restoration might be granted—would be the moment of her return to health.

Cousin Jack took a pretty furnished country house, with a large garden, a conservatory, and many other attractions; and there he placed little Ettie for the summer, sending poor homeless cousin Elizabeth to take care of her. And he often came himself to see her, and we need not say that somebody else often came too.

And now Ettie learnt several new and some pleasant things relating to the past. She learnt, first, that her senior guardian was dead, and that his charming son, Arthur Popinjay, was engaged to a Miss Emilia Empithed, who, as re-

port said, was pretty and always well dressed. She learnt, further, that Arthur had at one time determined to marry her (Ettie,) and that her removal to Cavendish Square had been effected by the father in furtherance of his silly son's wishes; that cousin Jack had not approved the plan for her removal, although, in ignorance at the time of its real object, he had recommended Ettie to fall in with it for the sake of peace. Cousin Jack said, too (what Ettie listened to with tears), that her father, on the day he died, had said how much he should like honest, hearty, true Blue Boy to marry his darling one day, and that Blue Boy was anxious to carry out this suggestion (as he considered it his bounden duty to do) at the earliest opportunity. And Ettie heard also—what she was proud indeed to hear—that in the terrible hour when the 'Ocean Ripple' was burnt, her Blue Boy had acted like a noble hero, and had been the means of saving several women and children, who, but for his exertions and bravery, must have perished. And then the story went on to explain the length of time which had elapsed before the boy's return. It told how he had been picked up, not by a homeward-bound ship, but by one sailing to a far-off port, and how a letter giving tidings of his safety had been lost.

Ettie became so calmly happy now, that her impetuous, demonstrative Blue Boy sometimes wanted her to be more

noisily in love with him. One day, being inclined for a sweet quarrel with his darling, he assumed the most injured air he could command, and asked her whether she was getting to care for him less, since she had become so terribly composed in her manners.

She put her arm within his, and led him to the conservatory. There she gathered a large tea-scented rosebud.

Pointing first to the fair, almost colourless outer petals, she gently unfolded, with her tiny fingers, the deepening tints wrapped up within, till at length she reached the intensely glowing centre, and held up before Blue Boy's eyes that wondrous, nameless hue—the blending, as it were, of fire and blood.

He understood her.

'You sweet little prophetess!' he exclaimed. 'Of course it was all my humbug. Did she think I really doubted the life and warmth of her true, true heart? Not I, indeed! And I wouldn't have her refined little outer self be anything but what it is for a million of worlds. Bless me, if I were only one-and-twenty, and could get hold of my tin—'

'A voyage or two first,' she said, wickedly.

Ah! but we can never be really separated again. I have *already* gathered, miss, and laid in my bosom for ever, my fair, fair rosebud, or, as I best love to call her, my sweet, spring blossom—my Violet.'









"As I stood by her in my long dark robes, and smoothed her hair and kissed her moist lips, I thought we looked like womanhood and childhood, experience and innocence, past and future!"

Drawn by J. D. Watson.

See "The Story of a Christmas Fairy."





As I could see her eyes, they were dark, and she looked very fair and kind, but her mother's, (though I  
have seen no picture of her) were, I thought, the same as mine, the same, the same, the same, the same.

— J. D. Watson.

See "The Story of a Christmas Tree."

## THE STORY OF A CHRISTMAS FAIRY.



Y profession — I am a surgeon — often brings to me very exceptional experiences. But lately I attended a very singular couple—a mother and child. They struck me as being remarkable, the first time I visited them. The mother had been a very handsome woman. Although perfectly polite and grateful for my attention, she had an odd, defiant, bitter manner that contrasted strangely with the excessive devotion she lavished on her child. I have heard her story, which, suppressing some technicalities uninteresting to the general reader, I give here as I am told it was narrated by her.

‘I have been a widow for four years. It may sound strange to those who take their notions of “dancers,” from books where they are represented as passing existence in short skirts and barouches, in ruining dukes, and laying enormous wages at the “Derby,” that a dancer should be a widow. According to those ingenious gentlemen who are admitted behind the scenes once in their lives, and who date their experiences from that intoxicating moment, we *danceuses* are

a race apart from women. Our smile is *stereotyped*—whatever that may be—we have no feeling, but are a sort of handsome gymnastic doll. The only things capable of rousing our inanimate natures to an exhibition of pleasure is a gift of diamonds. Diamonds for dancers! who are often too happy if the supper of bread and cheese be plentiful, and the modicum of drink be stout, not porter.

‘In speaking of ballet dancers I only mean those underpaid and suffering girls who receive and live upon their weekly stipend from the theatre, and who eke out a livelihood by needlework when they can obtain employment. I have no tale to tell of brilliant vice—but one of struggling poverty and terrible affliction!

‘My father died when I was an infant. My mother kept a small shop, the profits of which just enabled us to live. When I was quite a child I had a great passion for dancing, and evinced some ability. My mother was advised to place me under the instruction of a Mrs. Brennan, who trained children, and procured them engagements at the theatres. As soon as I joined her school, as I may call it—for there were forty of us—I was placed in the front rank. The second year Monsieur Ernest, the ballet-master, requested me to become his pupil. I did so, and when I was seventeen played Columbine in a London theatre.

‘After that I became a principal dancer. Before I was twenty my mother died. I used to feel very lonely when I returned from the theatre, and had to light my own fire, and found nobody to speak to. A young man, a few years older than myself, a gas-fitter, who had shown me some attentions, beau’d me to and from the theatre, proposed to me, and I accepted him. He was well-to-do in the world, and made it a condition of our marriage that I left the stage: he had heard of the diamonds and the barouches, and was jealous. It is certainly true that I had occasionally met with rudeness—most girls do; but I saw nothing of the brilliant temptations that I have read of. I married, and retired from the stage.

‘For three years I led a very happy life. The second year of our marriage my poor child was born. We christened her Ellen, after my mother. She was barely four years old, when affliction, with a heavy hand, came on us. My husband caught a fever. I tended him for a month; and when the earth closed over him, led my child from his grave brokenhearted.

'I tried, for my little girl's sake, to keep the business together, but I knew nothing of it; and my husband's foreman, who was a bad man, got the whole trade into his hands, and I had to leave the house where I had been so happy.

'I took another not far from Blackfriars Bridge, and tried to let furnished lodgings. My rooms were generally occupied, but many of my lodgers did not pay me, and the landlord was a hard man, and at the end of two years I was compelled to leave that too. I had never learned needlework, and was forced to return to the stage; but the managers would not have me as principal dancer. Want of practice had lost me what talent I once possessed, so I went into the ballet, for which I received fifteen shillings a week.

'When Ellen was seven years old I began to teach her dancing; it was all I could teach her; and at Christmas I got her an engagement as a fairy.

'During my absence from the stage an attraction had been introduced into pantomimes called a transformation scene. Every one knows what it is.

Of the opening a very gorgeous scene undergoes a great many changes, and the ballet, attired in beautiful dresses, are grouped about in graceful attitudes—on various parts of the scene. They are suspended from wires, and fixed in or seated on iron frames, or fastened to revolving wheels. It is a most painful position, for you must not stir from your pose, and the heat of the gas and the glare of the lime-light—another introduction new to me—burn the eyes and cause a fearful nausea. I say nothing of the blaze of coloured fire. I have known many strong, healthy girls faint and have hysterical fits, and the poor things have been accused of affectation. I often thought I should like some of the fat managers, stage managers, and painters to be "hooked" up, to see how they would like it.

'In the second pantomime I and my darling were engaged for, the artist, the mechanist, and the manager arranged a transformation scene that was to out-shine every one that had been or might, could, would, or should be attempted. It was called in the play bills:—

### THE TRIUMPH OF AUBORA!!!

BEING A

#### GRAND TRANSFORMATION SCENE!

FULL OF MECHANICAL EFFECTS OF THE MOST SURPASSING BEAUTY AND  
BOREALIC SPLENDOUR!!!

ALLEGORIZING

#### THE HOURS OF DARKNESS!!!

: LUNA, *Queen of Night* &c. . . . . MISS ARABELLA FANSWELL

CHASSED FROM THE HEAVENS BY THE ROSE BRIGHTNESS OF

#### THE HOURS OF DAY!!!

'AUBORA, *Goddess of Morn* . . . . . LA PETITE CÉLÉSTINE.

THIS SCENE, FOR THE COMPLETION OF WHICH THE MANAGER HAS INCURRED

VAST EXPENSE!

WILL INTRODUCE

A SERIES OF BRILLIANT BEAUTIES!

AND

GLORIOUS GALAXY OF SUPERNATURAL CHANGES!!

COMMENCING WITH THE

#### QUEEN OF NIGHT!

SURROUNDED BY HER STARRY HOST!!!

AND TERMINATING WITH THE

RISE OF AUBORA IN HER TRIUMPHAL CAR!!!

'It was indeed, apart from the silly magniloquence of playbills, a wonderful scene, and wrought a singular effect on the spectator. I saw its full effect at the rehearsals.

'At first the stage was entirely dark, as in chaos, or unilluminated space; black and purple clouds loomed into sight; and as they rolled away, the Hours of Night

—female figures robed in long, dark draperies, showered with stars, each bearing on her head a pale lurid lamp—rose frowningly. The music, solemn, low, and mournful, as each Hour appeared, wailed fitfully until the whole twelve were revealed, when it gradually swelled into a loud, majestic volume, like an organ thundering its fullest



diapason. As in obedience to the sound, the clouds in the centre rolled back, and slowly and grandly towered to view the Queen of Night. Round and about her played a mystical green light; her throne was of dark clouds jewelled with stars. The Monarch of Midnight held her away but a brief time. The music again changed, and passed to gentle, playful, genial melody. The Queen of Night was awed, and her obedient Hours hid the lamps upon their heads within their shroud-like mantles. Proud Luna slowly sank, and as she sank, her satellites shrank from her. The purple clouds gradually melted into blue, from blue to lighter blue, and then by soft gradations to pale transparent pink, from pink to rose, from rose to red, from which they soon flushed thick, ripe, sunset scarlet—from this again to the mingling of the clear blue and lustrous yellow of Morning—and when Time and her Hours had almost sunk from sight, the Hours of Morn—personified by children—appeared high up in the air floating and revolving around a sun or centre. The music varied with the varying colours of the clouds. A crash! The sun had risen, and the Goddess Aurora, in full majesty, appeared on a lustrous car of triumph. Intense and dazzling light sprang from and surrounded her. Deeper and deeper grew the blaze, louder and louder the music trumpeted the triumph of day. In the foreground, drowned in green and purple mists, crouched the prostrate Hours of Night—above the Hours of Day floated on a sea of rainbows, and brilliant, ever-changing, myriad molten glories.

"I personated one of the Hours of Night, and my Ellen, who was a pretty child with long, yellow hair, was chosen for Aurora.

"I objected at first that she would be frightened, but they overruled me and offered ten shillings a week extra money. The child said she should like it, as she would have a beautiful dress, and at last I consented.

"Ten shillings a week for ten weeks amounted to five pounds, a very important sum to me. In the theatre the actors need to call me "Six o'clock p.m." and my darling "Six a.m."

"The rehearsals went off well, and Boxing-night arrived. I shall never forget how beautiful my darling looked in her bright white dress, with its sheen of red and yellow jewels. What if they were false, their fires sparkled, and she was but a child. As I stood by her in my long dark robes, and smoothed her

hair and kissed her moist lips, I thought we looked like womanhood and childhood, experience and innocence, past and future!

"I parted with her in the flies,\* from whence she had to walk upon the bridge—a narrow footpath high over the stage—to reach her car. I promised her a cake if she were a good girl and not frightened, and was hoisted up, and fixed my lamp upon my head, on my grim perch. I was full of anxiety, not for myself but for my baby. As I looked down upon the thick folds of black gauze and the complicated machinery about me a shiver seized me.

"Don't be fit!" said a carpenter, "it's all right!"

"I was thinking of my poor dead husband, and of what he would have thought could he at that moment have seen his wife and child.

"The scene opened, the gauzes between me and the audience were drawn off, and I saw a house packed to the ceiling. The dank mass in the centre of the stage opened and Luna (Miss Fanshawe), was seen towering above us all. She was a dark-haired girl with wonderful eyes; the green light gave a sinister effect to her singular beauty; and she looked as pale and proud as a real queen. The gauzes near me moved again, and the purple and green clouds rolled into sight. The effect on the audience was electric, and the applause thundered through the house; the gauzes moved again, the blue gauzes were pulled away, and the pink (mediums they are called in the theatre) took their place. More applause; I grew terribly anxious as I began at the same time to descend and to move laterally towards the right. The ascent of the next gauze showed me the twelve children suspended round the centre from which my darling was to appear. The intervening mediums were moved away, and she came full upon my sight! Oh! how beautiful she looked! How my eyes feasted on her! I never shall forget that moment, the supreme one of a mother's pride. I knew that she was safe, for a strong iron wire was fastened to her, behind her waist, which supported her as much or more as the car on which she stood. The music crashed, the lime-light blazed full upon her face and figure.

"The theatre rocked with thunders of applause—the next moment I saw the car tilt forward, the child fall out of it, and hang in the air from the wire at

\* Galleries behind the scenes from which portions of the scenery are worked.

her waist. I heard the stage-manager's voice mingle with her shrieks. The lamp fell from my head and shivered into atoms as I struggled to reach and give her aid: I so near and yet so far from her, fixed so firmly, could not stir to help her! The wire still swung her to and fro—she clasped it with her little hands—turned her eyes to me, and cried "Mother! mother!" I had hopes she might be saved, when I heard a snap—the wire had broken, and she fell—head-foremost on the stage.

"I will not dwell upon my darling's pain or my despair. The fall did not kill her; she is a cripple for life.

"I had a benefit at the theatre, by which I made nearly 200*l*. Almost all the actors in London came to play for me. I heard one of them say to the manager—

"Better have no girls suspended or recumbent in the air than run the risk of death or mutilation, as in this sad case!"

"What can I do?" replied the manager. "They have 'em at other theatres, and it pleases the public! Competition, sir; competition!"

"And mutilation!"

"I can't help it. They have 'em at other theatres!"

T. W. R.

### A SPRIG OF HOLLY.

I DON'T think a jollier party can ever have assembled itself together than the one that was staying at the Firs last Christmas. The cause of this extraordinary joy and good feeling was to be found, perhaps, in none of us being of kin. There was not so much as a brace of cousins among the guests to mar the harmony, either by their love or hate. Added to this, our hostess had no sons to protect against insidious advances, and no daughters to get off. She could venture to be open-hearted and nobly reliant on the friends she had gathered together without doing violence to the maternal instinct.

The party included every element of success. We had handsome men and intellectual men, men of money and men of mark; and we had flirts, fascinating women, and one heiress.

The Apollo of the party was Lionel Poole, a treasury clerk. His good looks were a perpetual source of discomfort to somebody or other, for they were rather of the plaintive order. His eyes had a habit of saying more than they meant—unconsciously, let us hope, for the sake of his soul, for more than half of his young-lady acquaintances had been bidden adieu by him at night in a manner that left no doubt whatever on their minds that they were to be the recipients of an offer from him in the morning.

He was so pre-eminently handsome a man that I fear in describing him I may rather slur the indisputable claims he had to be considered something else. Lionel Poole was a clever man also, with a utility talent that turned everything to his own advantage.

To tell the truth, I was more than

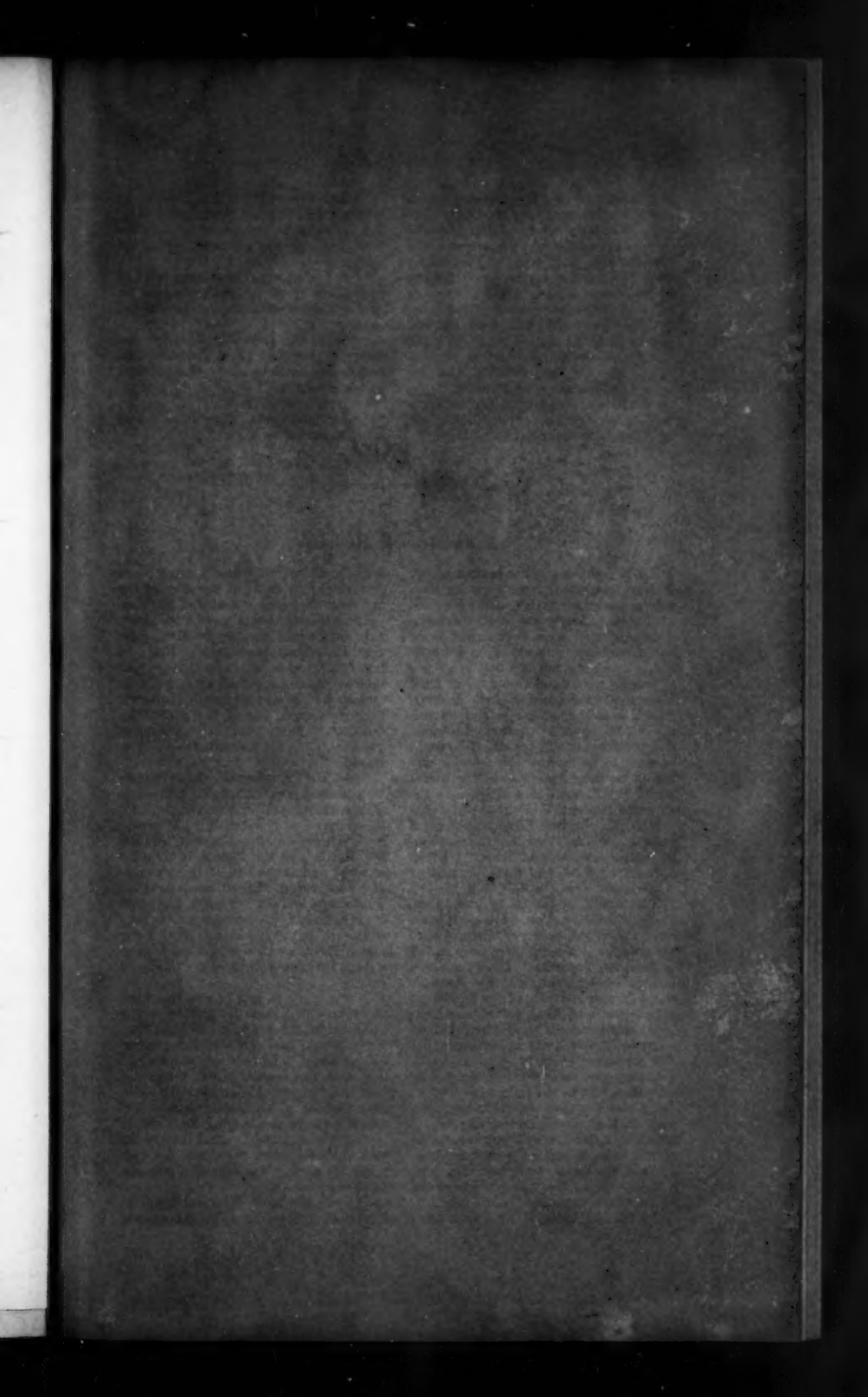
slightly astonished when I came down into the drawing-room the day of my arrival to find him installed at the Firs.

He was palpably a pampered guest, too, for he had the key of Mrs. Fitzgerald's private photograph album in his hand; and after that lady (our hostess) made her appearance, he went and sat by her side, and made comments that were inaudible to the rest of us, but that, to judge from the expression of his face, were not flattering to the portrayed ones.

Now Mrs. Fitzgerald had, the previous season, come out of the retirement of her widowhood for the first time, for the purpose of chaperoning her young cousin Alice Riley and myself through the shoals and quicksands of London society; and at the end of the season—only such a short time since—poor Alice went into a low state of mind, and on to the Continent, in consequence, it was whispered, of the sudden cessation of the attack Mr. Lionel Poole had made upon a heart that the world had not hardened yet.

I was sorry to see him at the Firs, therefore—sorry, that is, just for a few minutes, in fact, until he left Mrs. Fitzgerald's side and came to mine, where he remained. Ill-natured people had said that the beautiful Mrs. Fitzgerald had not resented his sudden defection from the side of her blonde charge, as it would have been becoming for a chaperon and cousin to do. And they added that the light which came into her eyes when his perfidy was discussed was not kindled by wrath.

She was the most beautiful brunette I ever saw, this young widowed hostess of





A SPRIG OF HOLLY.

"He saw a gentler glow."

Drawn by Edward J. Poynter.

See page 80.





A SERIES OF HOLLY

OF THE NEW & IMPROVED 1874.

Drawn by Edward J. Payson



ours. A graceful, charming woman, too, with a way that was winning alike to women and men. Why she had never married again—she had been five years a widow—we none of us knew for certain; but report had told me that her last husband, in a rabid fit of jealousy, had bound her by a solemn oath to be faithful for ever to his unpleasant memory.

Only one of the other men have I time or space to describe. He was a Captain Villars, R.A., and neither mad, methodist, nor married, as officers of that gallant corps are popularly supposed to be. He was not such a handsome man as Lionel Poole, nor could he converse in so subtly pleasing a way; but he was a man on whom a woman would rely instinctively, for one glance at his broad open brow, and frank, fearless, honest eyes showed clearly, even to the worst read in such matters, that he was the soul of honour.

The other ladies, too, are deserving of something better than the scant courtesy of a curt mention; so, as a curt mention is all I could make of them here, I will refrain from one at all, and simply say that I was the heiress.

During the earlier part of my sojourn at the Firs I did not observe Captain Villars or anybody else, but Lionel Poole and Mrs. Fitzgerald very much. I had known the soldier in London before, and then (it was before I had been left the fortune which altered my point of view of life entirely) he had seemed to like me well. But now he stood gravely aloof from me, and I scarcely noticed the fact, for I was absorbed in the contemplation of Lionel Poole.

We had a variety of ways of passing the time. No one thing at the Firs called upon us by reason of our doing it often through lack of something else to do. When it was fine, and the ground not slippery, there were riding horses and carriages; when it was bitter and brightly frosty, there was the artificial lake to skate on; and when we couldn't go out at all, there was the billiard and music room; and in the evenings we always had charades and *tableaux*.

In all of these Lionel Poole and Mrs. Fitzgerald excelled. She had a marvellous power of depicting intense passion—love, or hate, or scorn—and he we all declared to be a consummate actor. He was Rizzio to her Mary, Crichton to her Margaret of Navarre, Faust to her Gretchen, Leicester to her Elizabeth (and my Amy Robsart), and he was all things well.

'She is insatiable about private theatricals,' he said to me one morning when we were knocking the billiard balls

about together. 'I'm sick of playing at being Mrs. Fitzgerald's lover.'

I could not resist giving him a hasty glance as he spoke, for I wished to believe him, and wanted to read the truth in his face. His tender greyish-blue eyes (how tender they had been last night, when as the dying Italian minstrel he had fixed them on his royal mistress!) met mine unflinchingly, and I blushed.

'You must be aware, Miss Travers,' he went on in a low voice, 'that it was not to act the part of Mrs. Fitzgerald's lover that I came down to the Firs.'

I had already weakly begun to hope that it was not, but I could only say now, 'You act the part remarkably well.'

'She forces it upon me,' he said; and as he spoke Captain Villars came into the room, and the two men stiffened themselves at each other in that indescribable way men have of showing their mutual annoyance when a woman is the cause of it.

I soon left them together, for their ill-concealed dissatisfaction was depressing, and betook myself to Mrs. Fitzgerald's dressing-room, to which, in the earlier days of our intercourse, I had always been allowed free access. It was locked against me now, but she presently opened the door and admitted me with an air of the old welcome.

'Do I disturb you?' I asked.

'Oh no,' she answered, 'but I thought you were in the billiard-room with Lion—with Mr. Poole.'

'Well, I got tired of billiards, so I have left him to play with Captain Villars,' I answered carelessly; 'I thought I'd come to you,' I continued, 'and ask if you would tell me the rights of the story about Alice Riley.'

'I didn't know that there was any story about her.'

'Did Mr. Poole behave badly to her?' I interrogated, eagerly; for though my heart was nearly gone, I thought that I could withdraw it from a man who had been cruel to gentle Alice Riley.

'No, he did not,' she replied, almost sharply. 'Alice Riley was a little goose, and deceived herself.'

'I'm glad to hear it was only that,' I answered, absently, and then she flung her arms round my neck and kissed me and said—

'Dearest Eva, believe me that it was so. Don't distrust me.'

'She knows that he loves me, then,' I thought, for I was blind to the fact of its being herself that Blanche Fitzgerald was thinking about.

'How well a sprig of holly would look in your fair hair,' Lionel Poole

murmured to me a little later in the day; 'the vivid green leaves, and the brilliant veins, and the bright golden locks would intensify one another.'

I resolved immediately upon wearing one that night; but I would not tell him so. He should have the benefit of the full force of the flattery by seeing it in my hair.

It was to please and honour Lionel Poole that I at first decided to wear the sprig of holly.

I hardly know how it came about, but it did come about in a few minutes after this, that Lionel Poole made me believe that I had been the object that attracted him to Mrs. Fitzgerald's party so constantly during the past season, and that Mrs. Fitzgerald knew that it was so.

I suppose I believed it all firmly, for when our interview was over, he had proposed and I had accepted him; and to spare my blushes, he had suggested, with a vast show of magnanimity, to keep it quiet until after my departure.

'May I not—had I not better tell Blanche?' I asked; and he said—

'Well, I think not, Eva dear. She'll be so delighted at her expectations being realized that she'll air the fact, and then you will have no peace.'

About an hour after this I put on my balmoral, did my dress up in the most symmetrical vandykes, put on a seal-skin paletôt, and a cavalier hat and scarlet feather, and sallied forth into the snow-covered park in search of a sprig of holly befitting the occasion. I did not claim Mr. Lionel's escort, for I wanted to be alone to realize my new prospects.

At a short distance from the house I met Captain Villars. 'Are you going to join the others, Miss Travers?' he asked. And I told him, 'No; what others? and don't stop me, please; I'm to get something and go in and dress for dinner.'

'Don't be in such haste to quit me,' he said, rather mournfully. 'I'm going away to-morrow.'

'Going away?'

'Yes,' he said, stoutly. 'It's no use a man making an offer when he knows he'll be refused. But I can't stop any longer and witness your indifference.' And then seeing that I looked sorry, I suppose, he went on, 'And it makes my blood boil to see a woman I respect as I do Mrs. Fitzgerald, tolerate and encourage a heartless scoundrel.'

I did not condescend to reply to this attack on Lionel, but I drew myself up indignantly, and pranced off on my high heels like a loyal goat. I tried to think

that it was of no consequence, and that I had just as soon it was so. But all the time I felt sore and annoyed that Captain Villars should despise and condemn, however unjustly, the man I was going to marry.

'In spite of his having loved me in vain himself,' I said to myself, romantically, as I walked in the direction of a thick holly hedge, 'I hope that in time, when I'm married, Captain Villars will do justice to Lionel's noble qualities, and that we shall all be friends.' I attributed noble qualities to Lionel on the strength of his eyes being large and plaintive, and his nose delicately chiselled; and I thought his judgment sound, naturally enough, because he had chosen me!

The holly hedge ran along straight for a considerable distance, and then curled itself round in a small circle, in the centre of which stood an arbutus. On no portion of the straight part could I find a sprig that fulfilled all my requirements. I wanted plenty of berries, not in heavy masses, but judiciously sprinkled amongst the leaves. I could have pleased myself in Michel's or Eagle's ever so much sooner, I was fain to confess, as I grew bluer momentarily in the search. At last I came to the circle, the entrance to which was nearly blocked up by the branches of the arbutus, and there full in view, but at an elevation which I could not attain from the sunken path on which I stood, was a magnificent spray of holly.

Its leaves were vivid, glossy, gem-like, and its berries were so fairly placed between and about them, that I recanted what I had just given utterance to respecting Michel's and Eagle's. The ground inside was considerably higher, it was thickly turfed, and, in addition to this, the snow lay in frozen masses, for the sun's rays could scarcely penetrate the recesses of that gloomy little nook.

'I must have it,' I said, and I stepped into that magic circle which was to be the means of disclosing to me many things; and scarcely had I entered it when I heard voices coming up the path behind.

I did not recognize the voices till they approached my nook, where I had no fancy for being discovered getting the holly that Lionel admired. But when they came close I found that the disturbers of my solitude were Mrs. Fitzgerald and the man to whom I had betrothed myself.

Her tones were passionate and warm his low, distinct, and calm; they both fell clearly upon my ears; and from the

moment I heard her first words, for Blanche's sake, as well as my own, I could not betray myself.

'I have told you the truth,' she said; 'what is your answer to it, Lionel?'

'That I cannot ask you to sacrifice so much to my selfish love, dearest,' he answered, tenderly. 'No, Blanche, I am not so careless of you as you, even though loving me, had supposed. I cannot ask you to be my wife, dear, since it would cost you so much.'

I cowered down trembling with rage in my secluded nook as the pair paused at the entrance.

'If you would not count the cost,' she murmured fondly, 'I could bear poverty, even penury with you, Lionel, rather than be the mistress of the Firs with an empty, blighted heart.'

There was such simple womanly eloquence in her soul-fraught tones! My sympathies were all with her—with this woman who loved with a self-sacrificing love the man who had asked me to marry him that morning. What a double game he had been playing to bring such a climax about!

'Do not tempt me,' he said; 'for your own sake do not tempt me to make you violate the condition of that cruel will. I should be a coward to win you from such a place and position to share such a fate as mine.'

'Then why have you won my heart?' she cried with a great sob. And then I heard her light footsteps flying away, and I was left alone with only a hedge intervening between myself and this perjured man, who had won my promise to be his wife, though he affected love for another woman at the time, and only abstained from wedding her because I was the richer prize.

I read our mutual self-deceptions aright at that moment. I knew that poor Blanche had unconsciously deceived me, and that I had unconsciously deceived her, and that Lionel had wittingly deceived us both. But I did not see my way clearly out of this mass of deception yet; for I was engaged to this man; and I could not shame my friend by letting her know that I had heard that which would honourably relieve me from Mr. Poole.

I saw it all as I cowered under the holly hedge and he stood chewing the cud of meditation outside. I saw how he had fooled us both to the top of our bent till he had learnt which of the two was the richer woman. He had finally decided in my favour, though why he had done so before Mrs. Fitzgerald had told him (as I gathered from her broken words that she had

done) that she would lose her possessions by a second marriage, I was at a loss to imagine.

I shrank from the idea of going out and disclosing myself, and yet he made no move, and it was getting near the dressing hour and I was very cold! I could not feel sentimental, do all I would. This man seemed to me too thoroughly base and mean, with his trickery and calculations, for me to waste a thought about again. But I had liked him very much before I knew him to be the mere mercenary man he was; while, in fact, he was still an Apollo to me, and I did not desire to put him to the open confusion of coming out and detecting him. So I cowered behind my hedge and gazed at my holly sprig fondly: I resolved to wear it still on its own merits entirely, and not for the sake of my recreant lover, Lionel Poole.

He had stood perfectly quiescent for some minutes, apparently quite staggered by the sudden flight of Mrs. Fitzgerald, but he came back to animation with a light laugh presently and exclaimed—

'By Jove! that topmost spray would be the very thing for little Eva—killed two birds with one stone by coming here—I gained a true statement of the widow's finances, and I mean to gain a head-dress that will completely subjugate her vain little heart for Miss Traversa.'

I had resolved upon wearing that holly spray, but I felt that I could not take it from his hands! So now I rose from my crouching posture with an immense effort—drew myself up to my full height, which isn't colossal, and jumped at the coveted prize. He heard my efforts to gain it, and he saw a gauntlet glove gather the little sprig, but he did not see me, nor did he suspect it was me, for he walked away with a muttered imprecation for having been overheard by any one.

I tore back to the house and arrayed myself in a rush for dinner. I gathered all my golden curls in a mass behind, and fastened them with a jet comb, from which depended the precious sprig of holly in the search for which I had found the blessed truth that saved me from being that miserable thing, a wife married for her money. Then I went down to dinner, and had the satisfaction of seeing that Mr. Lionel Poole was considerably agitated by the sight thereof.

'Don't go away to-morrow,' I whispered to Captain Villars when the gentlemen joined us after dinner. And he

said, 'No, he wouldn't, if I really meant it.' Lionel Poole was rather *distract* for a time, but he recovered himself as the evening went, and came up to me as I sat on the sofa by Mrs. Fitzgerald, for we had not got up a charade that night.

'I want you to play me something,' he said; and when I rose and walked to the piano, he whispered—

'On the whole, Eva, dearest, I think you had better tell your friend of our engagement at once—that is, to-night. I shall leave the Firs early in the morning, and I could wish you to curtail your visit in order that we may meet in London again soon. I shall see your father to-morrow.'

'There will be no occasion for your doing so, Mr. Poole,' I answered, 'and though I think it will be a becoming thing on your part to leave the Firs as soon as possible, still I must beg that you will not consider me in the matter at all.'

'Why, Eva?' he said. 'I don't like transformations usually, but this less than any I have ever seen.'

He tried to take my hand, and I could not avoid recoiling, for I felt how base he must have been to have won such a passionate protest from Blanche Fitzgerald.

'Hedges have ears,' Mr. Poole, I replied, 'and the next time you propose

making two offers in one day with reservations, don't let it be behind a thick holly fence.'

I pointed as I spoke to my vivid brilliant ornament, and he glanced at it and accepted his defeat.

'Then you were there?' he said presently.

'I was there,' I replied; 'and though I have nothing to tell Mrs. Fitzgerald, I shall say good-bye to you when I leave the room to-night. She shall not hear anything from me, therefore she will think you one degree better than you are—which will still leave you not too bright an object of contemplation.'

'I will show you that I am not so wholly bad,' he said. And I did not believe him then. But this year I am compelled to admit that there was a strong alloy of goodness in this man to whom I was engaged for two hours before I married Captain Villars. For I have just had a note from Blanche (Fitzgerald no longer) asking us to spend Christmas with them in the new handsome Kensington mansion Lionel Poole worked so hard to gain when he found that the woman who loved him would lose 'The Firs' for his sake.

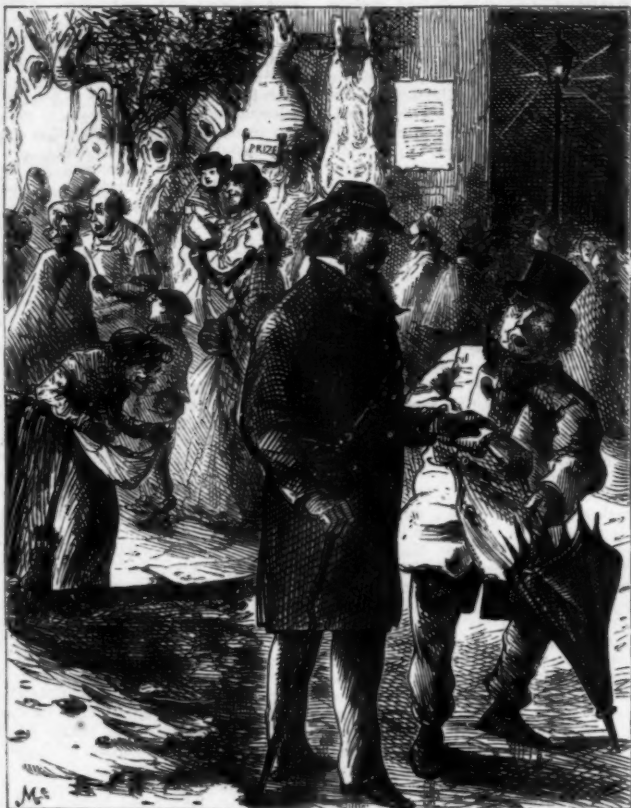
And this result would never have been obtained had I not gone in search of a sprig of holly.

A. H. T.



# HOW GOLDSWORTHY BROTHERS SPENT THEIR CHRISTMAS DAY.

## IN TWO CHAPTERS.



### CHAPTER I.

**I**T was Christmas Eve. The newly-lighted gasjets flung a ruddy gleam upon the snow which carpeted the streets of the great city. The flakes were falling still, but little chance had they to whiten on the flagstones, for the church towers had just proclaimed that it was five o'clock, and an ever-increasing throng of workers was pouring forth from the dusty city offices, and hurrying homeward, eager with the anticipation of their coming holiday.

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Few seemed inclined to loiter; friendly greetings were exchanged, but the wayfarers passed on without lingering to gossip, one and all wearing the same expression of cheery haste, the expression which is, or should be, on the face that is set towards home. Not quite all, however. From the foot of a narrow staircase, in one of the darkest and gloomiest of the city lanes, a man came forth, and paced, with a listless tread, towards the more open thoroughfare, where a handsome carriage was awaiting him. The whole equipage

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denoted wealth and position, and the appearance of the owner was in strict accordance with it. Grave, erect, dignified; clad in garments perhaps slightly behind the time as to fashion, but of the finest and most costly material; with snowy-white neckcloth and shirt front, and old-fashioned upright collar—Robert Goldsworthy looked the very incarnation of commercial respectability. Nor did his appearance belie him: as the senior and only surviving partner in the long-established firm of Goldsworthy Brothers, his credit was unimpeachable; and the balance at his banker's was almost equal to the whole capital of many a flourishing concern. Of mature age, but with still enough of youthful vigour to hold his head erect, and to sign his name to a cheque without one wavering stroke in the large, bold signature, which was good for so many thousands, surely Robert Goldsworthy was a man to be envied. And yet a close observer, studying the rich merchant's face, would have seen that a dark shadow rested there—a shadow which did not yield even to the cheering influence of Christmas associations; and the listless way in which, as he seated himself in his carriage to-night, he said to the coachman 'home!' showed that to him the word brought no joyful anticipations.

Far different was the effect of the coming holiday upon one occupant of the office which Mr. Goldsworthy had just left. Mr. Matthew Knibbs, the cashier of the house of Goldsworthy Brothers, at present busily employed in locking up the books of the firm, by no means shared his employer's want of appreciation of the festive season. Christmas, with a jovial determination to make it a right down merry one, was reflected in every feature. Even the books, the sacred books, handled so tenderly by Mr. Knibbs for all the rest of the year, were slammed and banged about to-night with a recklessness to which they were wholly unaccustomed. Knibbs was in a hurry to be home, and he didn't care who knew it. As soon as the books were safely deposited in their iron cupboard, Mr. Knibbs had a frightful struggle with a rather tight overcoat, and then, having squeezed his hands into a pair of brown Ringwood gloves, put on his hat with a positive bang, and exchanging 'merry Christmas,' in the heartiest of tones, with the few clerks who still lingered in the office, sallied forth, and commenced a rapid march homeward. Manfully, under his big umbrella, Mr. Knibbs pursued his way; occasionally

jostling a passer-by, but whenever he did so, apologizing so heartily, and smiling so genially, that pardon was instantly granted.

The shops of the various provision dealers displayed their wares in tempting profusion. Huge sides of prize beef, radiant with rich, firm, golden fat, and carcasses of mighty sheep—very monarchs of mutton—decorated with garlands of paper flowers, and rosettes of many-coloured ribbons, hung in rows in front of the shops of the meat salesmen, while rosy butchers, in clean blue blouses, sharpened their knives, and vociferated, Buy! buy! buy! with Christmas energy. Succulent porkers, recalling delightful memories of Elin and sage and onions, lay recumbent, with oranges in their mouths, and with their innocent eyes closed for ever on this wicked porkivorous world. And here and there, where the baby porkers were most numerous, a pen might, by a close observer, be seen within, where a big brother pig lay, like Mr. Jeaffreson's last novel, 'Not dead yet,' but sleeping that profound and dreamless slumber which is proverbially the portion of poor wretches doomed to speedy execution, while outside might be seen (alas for greatness!) a placard setting forth the age, weight, and other amiable qualities of the doomed one. Geese and turkeys, widgeon and wild ducks, hares and pheasants, hung in admired confusion. Rosy-cheeked apples, golden oranges, purple grapes, lay in rich heaps, that Lance or Duffield would have longed to paint, and meaner mortals—but no matter! Grocery, unromantic, nay, commonplace for the remainder of the year, on this night rose to the dignity of a fine art. Undeveloped pudding, in the shape of currants of Zante, and raisins of Malaga, interspersed with citron and candied peel of somewhere else, would be at all times, one would think, sufficiently tempting, but to-night they shone with a glory beyond their own. Sprigs of holly, with bright red berries, lent a contrast to the expanse of rich dark colour, with an effect which must have been seen to be believed. Even the tallow-chandler was great to-night. Elegant devices formed of candles, candles of wax, candles of tallow, and candles of paraffin, gorgeously tinted, and tastefully arranged, formed cones, and pyramids, and temples in the windows, while wreaths of holly and ivy, roses and hawthorn, hung in festoons from pane to pane.

Our friend Knibbs made a few purchases, but his investments seemed to



lie rather in the direction of toys and trinkets than in the establie line; until he found himself opposite a quiet, old-fashioned grocery establishment, less gorgeously decorated than many of the others, but bearing the stamp of quality upon the appearance of its wares. Here Knibbs entered, and made various purchases tending towards pudding, but in small quantities; also a goodly supply of tea and sugar. Then stowing his various parcels away in his capacious pockets, he hurried on, merrily as ever, till he came to a street corner, where an old crone, bent nearly double with age and infirmity, was sweeping, or attempting to sweep, a very muddy crossing. The ancient dame looked up, and her dull eye brightened as she recognized Knibbs, for he was a steady and constant patron. To-night, however, he did not at once produce the accustomed copper, and pass on, but stopped to parley.

'Well, Mrs. Brown, how's trade to-night, and how do we get on for the pudding-to-morrow?'

'Thank you kindly, sir,' the old woman replied, 'I can't complain; I've taken a goodish many coppers, and one silver threepenny to-day; but as to pudding, it ain't much o' that the likes of us gets.'

'Well, now, do you think you could make a pudding if you came across the materials?'

'Lor bless 'ee, sir,' the old woman replied, 'I don't know nothing 'bout 'terials; but I reckon if I had a quarter o' flour, and a trifle o' raisins and sugar, that me and my neighbour, Mrs. Duffy, 'ud make out a pudding somehow.'

'Well, then, at any rate you shall try. Hold up your apron.'

So saying, Knibbs disencumbered himself of his parcels, one after another, and adding a bright florin, to buy a bit of meat, and the flour for the pudding, hurried on faster than ever, to escape the thanks and blessings which the old woman gratefully showered upon him.

He had only proceeded a few steps, however, when an individual, who had watched the whole transaction, tapped him on the shoulder. 'You go the right way to earn a merry Christmas, Mat Knibbs.'

Knibbs started, seeming as much ashamed of his good act, as if he had been detected in the commission of a petty larceny. Recovering himself, however, he turned to look at the person who addressed him, but though the familiarity of the greeting seemed

to betoken that he was an old acquaintance, Matthew's eyes wandered over his figure without any sign of recognition. The stranger appeared to be perhaps forty-four or forty-five years of age; strong-limbed, of the middle height, and with pleasant features, much tanned by exposure to wind and weather, and somewhat hidden by a profusion of greyish beard. Their expression was frank and open, with a look of quiet resolution and self-reliance that seemed to bespeak one who had faced the world, and was not afraid of it.

Knibbs' face wore a puzzled expression, 'as if some look or tone of the stranger touched a chord in his memory, but so faintly that the dim remembrance had not strength to shape itself into actual recollection. The stranger resumed: 'You don't remember me, old friend! Well, perhaps it's no wonder; a good many years have passed since you and I met; but I should have thought Matthew Knibbs, of all men, would have had a better memory.'

As he spoke, he turned half round, so that the glare of the gaslight fell full upon his face, at the same time raising his hat, and affording Knibbs a fuller view than he had yet had of his features. Knibbs started; the light of a sudden recognition shone in his eyes, and a strange excitement made his voice quiver.

'If the dead could come back to life again, I should say it was Mr. John!'

'And it is Mr. John himself, Mat Knibbs, and right glad he is to stand on English soil, and grasp an old friend's hand once more. Dead, you thought me, eh? Then you never had my letters! I have often wondered how it was that no one ever wrote.'

'Never a line, Mr. John. Mail after mail came in after you left, but we did not give up hope till we heard of the loss of the ship you sailed in. It was a bitter day, sir, when the news came; you were a kind friend to all of us; and there was many a grown man in the firm had tears in his eyes that day, and wasn't ashamed of it either. It's given my old heart a turn, I can tell you, sir, to see you safe home again.'

'The news was true enough,' said the stranger. 'The "Atlantia" was wrecked, but I escaped, at the cost of spending two years of my life among half-naked savages. The story of my adventures is too long to tell now; however, I got away to a civilized land at last, and my first thought was to write for news from home. And I did write, again, and again, and again; till I lost all hope, and wrote no more; conclud-

ing that my brother must have died, or failed, and that the firm of Goldsworthy Brothers had ceased to exist.'

'But your letters—ah! I see it all,' said Knibbs. 'About a year after you left, your brother ceased to reside at the business house. He purchased a mansion at Kensington, and at the same time transferred the business to larger offices in the City. We sent circulars round to all our correspondents, apprising them of the change. For the first month or two a clerk used to go down occasionally to the old place, to see if there were any letters there: but that soon ceased, long before your first letter could have reached England. The place has never been occupied since, except by an old deaf woman, who takes care of it, and I haven't the least doubt that your letters are lying there now.'

'Likely enough,' said John Goldsworthy. 'So much for the past, now a word of the present. My little girl! She lives?'

'Yes, Mr. John, and a dearer little lady never gladdened a father's heart. It'll be a happy day for her when she hears that you have come home alive and safe.'

'Will it, Knibbs? Well, we shall see. A girl who has been reared by a rich uncle, with every luxury, may hardly care to be claimed by a vagabond father, with all his fortune on his back.'

'Shame on you for the thought, Mr. John! But I forgot, you can't know Miss Nelly, of course, and I beg your pardon. All the gold she needs is in her heart, bless her! and if you were a beggar—I beg your pardon again, sir, but I can't pick my words to-night—if you hadn't a penny, you'd be as welcome as if you were a king. I ought to know her well, sir; I held her in my arms when she was a baby; and for the last seven months she has lived in my house, and been like one of my own.'

'In your house, Knibbs! What has happened to my brother?'

'Dear, dear, Mr. John; that's my unlucky tongue again. However, you must know all about it sooner or later, and perhaps it's just as well as it is. Well, sir, I'll tell you. Since you went away, and left the dear child in your brother's care, times have changed a good bit with him. He always was a little bit stiff and stately, you know, Mr. John; and now he is some ten times richer than when you left, and he is prouder and sterner than ever. I believe he loved Miss Nelly a good bit, after his own fashion, and intended to make her his heiress, for he has never married,

and he had set his heart upon her making a good marriage, and all that; and I believe he had fixed upon some grand gentleman, with mountains of money, but old enough to be her father, or nearly. As luck would have it, though, Miss Nelly had already made a choice for herself, and a good worthy young man too, but not over well off, for he is only a clerk at present. His name is Walter Arden: you remember old Nicholas Arden, who was cashier in the firm before me—for I'm the cashier now, Mr. John. Well, sir, the young man is his nephew; and a worthier, more upright young fellow never stepped, and quite a gentleman, though he was only a clerk in the office. He was a bit of a favourite with your brother, and he used to invite him to his house now and then; and perhaps that made the young people think he wouldn't be so much against it. However, when Mr. Goldsworthy wanted Miss Nelly to marry this rich gentleman, of course it all came out, and he was fearfully angry, almost out of his wits with passion; and the end of it was, he said Miss Nelly must either give up Walter on the instant, or leave his house, and consider herself cast off for ever. The poor child has a spirit of her own, notwithstanding her gentleness; and it wasn't likely that, so true-hearted as she is, she would give up her lover; so Mr. Robert told her to quit his house, and never let him see her again.'

John Goldsworthy's face had grown sterner and sterner during Knibbs' recital. The tightly-shut lips, and flashing eyes, showed how deeply he was moved, and almost hoarse with emotion he gasped, 'Go on, man, go on!'

'There isn't much left to tell, sir. The poor dear child was almost brokenhearted, as you may imagine. Fancy, only eighteen, and reared in every luxury, and to be turned out in the streets to find her way in the world by herself. Oh, it was an awful thing, Mr. John! The sin must have lain heavy on your brother's heart; and I believe it has, for he has not been the same man since that night.'

'Knibbs, you are maddening me; for heaven's sake let me hear the end.'

'Well, sir, the worst is told, thank God! Providence put it into her poor bewildered little head to come to us, knowing we were sincere friends, though in a humble way. Dear, dear; I never shall forget when I came home that night, and found the dear child sobbing in my little woman's arms. My little woman, that's Mrs. Knibbs, you know,

sir, and a better wife, or a kinder, more tender-hearted soul, never breathed, though I say it that shouldn't; and I don't see why I shouldn't, either, God bless her! The poor child was almost in despair at first; and what she would have done I can't say, for she hadn't come to us intending to stay, but only just as the first place she could think of in her trouble, and she wanted to turn governess, or seamstress, or something or other to get her own living. Well, we talked to her, and comforted her, and my little woman—women have such a soothing way, you see, sir, when any one's in trouble—she coaxed her, and kissed her, till the poor dear child got a little quieter, and we persuaded her to stay with us till she got something better; so she has been with us ever since. She was terribly afraid of being a burden to us, and made herself quite miserable about it at first, till Dorothy hit upon the idea that she should do some water-colour drawings, and I should take them and sell them. So I take them, and bring her home a little money now and then, as if I had disposed of them to the dealers; and the truth is, I did try once or twice at first, but there isn't much of a market for such things, and I hadn't the heart to let them go at the prices they offered; so there they all are, wrapped up in tissue paper in my desk at the office. It pricked my conscience a little to deceive her, dear child; but it made her so happy to think that she was doing something for herself, that I couldn't make up my mind to undeceive her.

John Goldsworthy dashed his hand across his eyes. 'Knibbs, old friend; I can't say all I feel just now; but God will reward you and your good wife for your kindness to my motherless child.'

Poor Knibbs shuffled, and coloured up to the roots of his hair, as if he was thoroughly ashamed of himself. Nor was his embarrassment lessened when John Goldsworthy seized his hand and shook it as if he intended to shake it off altogether.

'Mr. John! Mr. Goldsworthy! don't, pray. You're hurting me, you are indeed.' And the squeeze must have been very hard indeed, for there were tears in the little man's eyes.

'Bless my heart!' he exclaimed, as soon as he had got his hand free from his companion's grasp. 'What a head I have got, to be sure! Here am I keeping you talking out in the street, while you are longing to see your daughter. I know what a father's feelings are, Mr. John. I wouldn't have one of my little ones away from me for

a week, no, not for twenty pounds, that I wouldn't. And yet I'm keeping you from your daughter after being parted near upon twenty years. Come along with me, sir. It isn't a very splendid home, ours, but we keep happy hearts and plenty of love in it; and such as it is, you shall be a welcome guest; not less for old friendship's sake (you'll excuse an old man's freedom, Mr. John), not less for old friendship than for the sake of the dear child, and whom your return will make so happy.'

'I'll come, you may be sure, old friend,' said John Goldsworthy; 'but not to-night, not to-night. There is a tempest of wrath within me I dare not bring into her gentle presence. Before I see my dear child's face I have an account to claim—a reckoning to settle with the man who did his duty so well to his brother's orphan child.'

Knibbs' face fell. 'Then you won't come home with me to-night?'

'No, old friend, not to-night. You will have to bear with me, for I have knocked about so long alone in the world that I dare say I have got somewhat strange and cranky in my ways, and don't do things quite as other people do. My business to-night is with my brother. To-morrow, if you will let me, I will claim your hospitality. And one word more. I wish you, if you will, to keep my secret for a little time longer. Let me come to you to-morrow merely as an old friend of yours, and see my little girl in her daily life among you; and let me, in my own good time, reveal the secret myself. I should like to see with my own eyes that she is not spoiled by wealth, before I tell her how poor her father is. You will humour me, will you not?'

'Of course I will, if you wish it. I dare say the good news won't spoil by keeping; but you'll tell her soon, won't you, sir? It seems hard to keep such happiness from her.'

'To-morrow, Knibbs, I promise you. You may be sure that I should never part from my darling without telling her she is mine.'

'Just a word more, Mr. John,' said Knibbs. 'If it isn't too much to ask, might I give Dorothy just a hint? I'm so happy myself she'd be sure to notice it, and we both love Nelly so dearly.'

'If you'll answer for her discretion, you may tell her as much as you like. And now give me my brother's address, and good-bye till to-morrow. And remember, I come as an old friend of your own.'

'I won't forget,' said Knibbs. And after noting down the required ad-

dresses, Knibbs shook hands warmly with his friend, and the two parted.

John Goldsworthy paced along with rapid strides till he reached his brother's house, which was in a fashionable west-end square. The peal which he gave at the bell so disconcerted the aristocratic footman, whose duty it was to answer it, that he lost his presence of mind, and compromised his dignity by opening the door almost instantly.

'Is Mr. Goldsworthy at home?'

'Mr. Goldsworthy is *in*,' said the lacquey, who was not impressed by the appearance of the visitor. A person who came on foot, without an umbrella, through pouring sleet and snow, could hardly be of much consequence, and Thomas returned to his dignity accordingly. 'But he is pertickler engaged, and can't see you to-night.'

'He *will* see me, and to-night,' said John Goldsworthy, striding into the hall, and shaking himself to get rid of the snow which clung to his garments.

The footman stood aghast at the assurance of his visitor, and was about to return an impertinent answer, but something in the eye of John Goldsworthy restrained him, and he said meekly, 'What name shall I say, sir?'

'None whatever. I will announce myself. In which room shall I find your master?'

The overwashed footman indicated a door, which John Goldsworthy opened without knocking, and entered the room, while Thomas retreated to the servants' hall to give a miraculous account of the daring visitor.

The room which John Goldsworthy entered so unceremoniously was a handsomely furnished library, and at a table near the centre sat the City merchant, reading. The only light proceeded from a shaded lamp, which brightly illuminated the table, and all below a certain level, but left the remainder of the room in darkness. The merchant raised his head as the door opened, but owing to the partial light could not distinguish the features of his visitor. John Goldsworthy strode up to the table, and seated himself, without a word, in a chair directly facing that of his brother. As he did so, Robert Goldsworthy, much amazed at the singular conduct of his visitor, raised the shade of the lamp, the light of which streamed full upon John Goldsworthy's stern features. His brother's face changed to a look of stricken terror. His features grew ashen white, and his teeth chattered, while his hands convulsively clasped the arms of his chair, as though he would have fallen without their support. 'John!'

he gasped, 'has the grave given up its dead?'

'No, Robert Goldsworthy,' said John, sternly. 'Put aside your fears. I landed but yesterday in England, and my first thought was to embrace my brother, and the dear child I had left in his charge. Since that time, strange reports have reached me; and before I can stretch out to you the right hand of brotherly affection, I must know how you have discharged my trust. Where is my child?'

'Forgive me, forgive me, John! God help me, I cannot tell!'

'You cannot tell! You *cannot* tell. Robert Goldsworthy! Let me remind you of the past. Twenty years ago, I had a wife. You know how good and pure and beautiful she was. You know, you better than all men, how dearly, passionately I loved her, how all that was pleasant in the world to me, was bound up in her. You know how she was taken from me. The hour that gave me my daughter, took away my wife, though I would have given twenty baby lives to have saved hers. You know my deep despair, my unutterable grief, my delicious moaning, day and night, for my lost love. You know that you yourself, fearful for my reason, and in the hope of distracting my thoughts, insisted that I should go out to India on the business of the firm. I went, I left my baby with you, confident in your promise that you would care for and cherish her as your own. I was shipwrecked; but I escaped, as you see, with life. I have but just now discovered how it was that my letters never reached you, nor any came from you to me. I have made fortunes, and lost them. However, what my life has been matters little. Since I have been away, time and change have worn away my grief. I can speak of my lost wife now without a tear; but of the dear love that once was hers, not one heart-beat is lost. As I loved my wife once, I love my daughter now. The holy memory of the dead mother and the living child, has been with me, cherished in my heart in every waking moment of more than eighteen years: my one thought, my one wish, to be able to claim my child on earth, before I should be called to meet her mother in heaven. Robert, I left my child in your care. I ask you for her now.'

Robert Goldsworthy hid his face in his hands. There was silence for some moments, and then John Goldsworthy spoke again, in that grave, solemn tone which seemed to strike cold upon the heart of his brother. Robert, I have

come to claim my child. I ask you to give me my child."

By a great effort Robert Goldsworthy raised himself upright in his chair. "Brother John, until six months ago, God knows I faithfully kept your trust. Until six months ago, Nelly was in this house as much mistress as if she had been my own child. No care, no expense was spared to make her all that you could wish her. All that gold could purchase was lavished upon her, and I loved her, God knows how dearly I loved her. All that I had was hers. In an unhappy moment an offer was made to me for her hand. The suitor was an old friend of my own, an upright, honourable man, having all that could be desired in wealth and position to offer her, and I approved his suit. However, Nelly had already, without my knowledge, formed an attachment to a clerk in my own counting-house. I had nothing to say against the young man's character, but I considered it presumption in one in his position to aspire to the hand of my adopted daughter, and I insisted that she should give him up. She refused, and one night, one miserable night, provoked by what I considered her obstinacy, I spoke in anger words that I should not have spoken at a calmer moment, and commanded her either to give up her lover or to leave my house for ever. She came and knelt down to me, sobbing, but I turned my back upon her, and, God help me! I have never seen her since."

The fixed stern look upon John Goldsworthy's face had never changed. "And so, Robert Goldsworthy, you turned your brother's child out at night into the streets!"

"Stop, John, I do not defend myself, but one word more, before you condemn me quite. Until the breakfast hour the next morning I had no idea she was gone; and from that hour I have been a miserable man." With a shaking hand Robert Goldsworthy reached from a side table a pile of newspapers, and seizing one, ran his finger down the page. "'June 6th.'—that was the day after she left—" "If E. G. will return home, all will be forgiven." From that day to this I have never ceased to advertise, to entreat and pray her to come home. This is the last-to-day's—" E. G. is entreated to return to her distracted uncle, who prays her forgiveness, and will do his best to promote her happiness." But all in vain—day after day has passed, and no tidings, no tidings. From the day when she left me I have not known one happy moment; and I have had to go about my daily business,

to speak to my clerks and servants with a quiet face, while a worm was gnawing at my heart. Brother John, will you not forgive me?"

John Goldsworthy was silent for a few moments, and when he spoke it was in the same quiet, icy tone. "No, Robert; you must seek forgiveness from her whom you have so deeply wronged. I cannot forgive you. I left my child in your care, and from the day I did so, no thought has ever crossed my mind that you could betray my trust. Had such a thought arisen, I should have spurned it, as an insult and a disloyalty to you. I come home. I come to demand my child. I find that the man I trusted most on earth, my own brother, has turned my child into the streets, for the dire offence of having given her affections to an honourable young man, in preference to a middle-aged millionaire. And for such a cause, for following the natural impulse of her fresh young heart, you turned her out of your house. Heavens! the thought makes my blood boil. You were kind to her, after your fashion, for eighteen years. But for that one remembrance, I feel as if I could strike you to the ground where you stand."

"John! John!"

"Silence, and hear me out! There is an angry devil at my heart would almost prompt me to the guilt of a second Cain, and to escape the tempter I must fly. Half an hour ago, you did not know you had a brother. Forget it again, if you can. Henceforth, if we meet, we meet as strangers. I, for one, shall not seek your face again until I have forgiven you the wrong you have done my child, and that, if I know my own heart, will be never!"

Robert Goldsworthy hid his face in his hands. When he looked up again, he was alone.

Alone!

## CHAPTER II.

Christmas Day! and the great heart of humanity beats with a quickened pulse, sending glad throbs through the veins of young and old. In thousands of homesteads in town and country, throughout our English land, joyous greetings are exchanged, and cordial 'Merry Christmas' and hearty handshakes pass around. Bright and happy, with rosy faces and laughing eyes, groups of children, with father and mother at their head, troop out into the streets and lanes, and tramp cheerily through the crisp white snow to their



accustomed church. The ancient pew-  
openers, in their clean white caps and  
gowns guiltless of crinoline, wear a  
radiance in their wrinkled faces that  
even the prospect of liberal Christ-  
mas boxes will hardly account for;  
and the organ, blending with the  
fresh young voices of the schoolchild-  
ren, seems to have a sweeter, mellower  
tone than usual as it peals forth the  
well-remembered old Christmas hymn  
tunes. And the good parson, prosy  
sometimes, is quite eloquent, in a  
homely way, to-day; for he is preaching  
on the glad theme of 'Peace on earth,  
good will to men,' and his heart goes  
with his words, as he tells of the babe  
that was born at Bethlehem, and 'God  
and sinners reconciled.' And when  
the sermon is ended, and the parting  
hymn is sung, dear! it is quite a pleas-  
ant sound to hear the chink of the  
falling money as it rattles into the  
silver plates or oaken boxes—the  
money which is to help the poor over  
their Christmas time, and give them a  
taste of the good cheer their happier  
brothers enjoy in such profusion. Who  
will grudge his mite to-day? Even  
the hardest, closest-fisted, feels a warm  
spark glowing in some out-of-the-way  
corner of his heart, which prompts him  
almost against his will to works of  
kindliness and charity; and the most  
careful housekeeper, thriftily looking  
twice at the pennies for all the rest of  
the year, will quietly put a bright half-  
sovereign in the plate to-day, and  
perhaps find a silver sixpence for little  
Johnny to give, in the bargain. And,  
coming out of church, what cheery  
neighbourly greetings are exchanged!  
Jolly old papas and grandpapas slap  
each other on the back, and mutually  
admire each other's children and grand-  
children, and ask how Bob is getting on  
at school, and pretend to be tremen-  
dously astonished at Tom's remarkable  
development for eleven and a half;  
and compliments are paid to mater-  
familias' blooming countenance; and  
jovial family arrangements are made  
regarding Christmas-trees, and blind-  
man's buff, and hunt the slipper. And  
stray bachelors, who have just been la-  
menting their hard fate in having to  
dine by themselves, are pounced upon  
and carried off, to spend the day with  
pleasant family gatherings, and to be  
guilty of exceedingly improper doings  
in connection with the mistletoe; and  
poor relations find their timid greet-  
ings pleasantly acknowledged, and  
themselves invited to roast beef and  
plum-pudding. And even ancient  
enemies, who have cherished old feuds

for ages, catch each other looking  
furtively pleasant and agreeable; and,  
after a moment's hesitation, the bit-  
terest of the two, with a slight flush  
on his cheek, holds out his hand, and  
says, 'Suppose we let bygones be  
bygones, Mr. Smith; and a merry  
Christmas to you.' 'And Mr. Smith  
says, 'With all my heart, Jones, and  
same to you, and many of 'em; and  
then they shake hands violently, and  
nearly quarrel again, as to whether  
Jones shall come to Smith, or Smith  
shall go to Jones, to cement the new  
friendship with particular old port.  
Surely all this cordiality, this heart-  
expansion, this genial lovingness of all  
to all, does not proceed only from the  
fact that all are about to enjoy a com-  
mon holiday. If we needed a proof  
that the old Christmas story is true, I  
think we need do no more than listen  
in our own hearts, after church some  
Christmas morning, for the echo of the  
song of the angels, 'On earth peace,  
good will to men.'

Matthew Knibbs had been to church,  
gallantly escorting the fair Nelly and a  
blooming matron, whom it required no  
great degree of skill in divination to  
recognize as Mrs. Knibbs; and followed  
in state by seven small Knibbses, every  
one of them in high glee and self-gratu-  
lation at the prospect of unlimited goose  
and pudding; and privately interchang-  
ing heartfelt but incongruous aspira-  
tions that the sermon wouldn't be a  
very long one, and that there would  
be plenty of sage and onions. Knibbs  
himself had other matters to think of;  
but the nature of his reflections was  
such that his round red face looked  
as jovial and happy as that of the  
jolliest of the infant epicures. The  
two things that for the nonce most en-  
grossed his attention were the anti-  
cipated happiness for Nelly, and the  
difficult achievement of keeping in step  
with his fair companions. The truth is,  
our friend Knibbs was considerably the  
shortest of the three; he was accus-  
tomed, as we have seen, to speak of  
Mrs. Knibbs as his 'little woman'; but  
the epithet was probably merely a term  
of endearment, having no actual rela-  
tion to size. Being, as we have said,  
short of stature, Knibbs was never  
happier than when he could induce a  
lady to take his arm; two ladies, of  
course, being the ultimatum of bliss.  
Why it should have been so is hard to  
conjecture, for as, on the present occa-  
sion, Knibbs generally had to walk on  
tiptoe to raise himself to the level of  
his position. However, Mrs. K. has  
been heard to remark fondly on





*Drawn by M. Ellen Edwards.*

[See page 45.]

'I say not unto thee Until seven times, but until seventy times seven.'

several occasions, Knibbs was 'such a man!' And no doubt he was.

After the lapse of about a week, as it seemed to the junior Knibbses, church was over, and the happy family hurried back to their dwelling, where a glorious odour of goose reigned paramount from floor to ceiling. And, almost before hats and bonnets were fairly off, in came Walter Arden; and then, two minutes later, Knibbs' old friend, John Brown, who had travelled all round the world, and to several other places, and had just come back on purpose to spend Christmas Day with them. And what a remarkable man that John Brown was, to be sure! The first thing he did when he came in was to kiss Mrs. Knibbs! Not one of your mild little pecks, such as boarding-school young ladies give one another when they meet, but a real, right down hug, with three or four hearty smacks; and that mean-spirited Knibbs never offered to punch his head, or even told him he'd better not do it again, but looked on as if he rather enjoyed it than not, and shook hands with him afterwards with the greatest apparent cordiality. And then John Brown shook hands with Walter Arden, and called him 'my boy,' as if he had known him for years; and then he lifted the children all up one by one as high as his head, and kissed them too. And, last of all, he came to a quiet, gentle girl, with earnest, loving eyes (with a spice of fun in them, notwithstanding), and a profusion of soft brown hair, who was standing all alone by the side of the fire; and here he was less bold, but held out his brown hand, and almost timidly took the wee white one which was laid in his, and gazed at it tenderly—almost wonderingly—as if it were some art-treasure of rare and surpassing workmanship, not to be roughly handled, until the fair maiden blushed, and drew it away. And then they dined, dined royally, as those who feast on roast goose and plum-pudding should do; not forgetting to put aside a splendid slice of each for poor lame Biddy, the rheumatic old apple-woman round the corner; and the boys tossed up as to who should have the pleasure of taking it to her; and, finally, the losers, not to be beaten, made a rush for their caps and comforters, and went too.

And after dinner Knibbs produced a bottle of wonderful old port, a beverage only to be mentioned on the grandest of grand occasions; and John Brown made the old man's face glow with pride, by remarking that 'they couldn't get such stuff as that where he came

from. No; not for a guinea a bottle!' And there was snap-dragon for the children, and they all burnt their fingers, and set themselves on fire, and had to be put out, and enjoyed themselves immensely; and John Brown, in defiance of Mrs. Knibbs's protestations, nursed four of them on his lap at once, with another climbing up the back of his chair. And he sang comic songs, and cut out pigs in orange-peel, and manufactured remarkable candles made of apples, and lighted them, and ate them up alight without the slightest inconvenience; with other magical wonders too numerous to mention; and imitated the cry of the tooral-loo! on the American prairie (very like!), and the sound of a pair of boots tumbling down the chimney, with variations of Wellingtons and Bluechers; and taught the children to say 'Merry Christmas to you' in Spanish and other unknown tongues; and wasn't a bit angry when Master Peter Knibbs surreptitiously introduced a snowball into his pocket, and saved the aforesaid Peter Knibbs from the imminent danger of being sent to bed immediately in consequence; and, in short, conducted himself in the most remarkable, unheard of, but delightful manner.

The only member of the company who did not view the state of things with unqualified satisfaction was Walter Arden. It could not be denied that everybody present was getting on remarkably well with the wonderful stranger. Now, everybody present, with one exception, was quite welcome to be as friendly with Mr. Brown as ever they liked, but Walter did think that Nelly, as an engaged young lady, need not have laughed quite so often, or so merrily, at the antics (Walter thought 'antics' a very cutting word, and said it over again to himself, as if he enjoyed the flavour of it)—the antics of a perfect stranger. And, moreover, lovers' eyes are clairvoyant, and Walter observed a sort of affectionate care and unobtrusive tenderness in Mr. Brown's manner towards Nelly, which was intensely aggravating, and all the more so as there was nothing sufficiently noticeable to take open offence at. And, to crown all, Nelly, who was usually reserved and shy with strangers, seemed perfectly at her ease with Mr. Brown, and accepted his attentions with complacency, not to say appreciation. And, having thought the matter over, Walter decided that he didn't like it a bit! And he made himself very miserable accordingly, and went and sat by himself in a corner, and clenched his fists

(in his trouser pockets), and glowered at Mr. Brown until Mrs. Knibbs got quite apprehensive that he would commit a breach of the peace, and tried to give her husband a hint; but dear old Knibbs was so engrossed in his enjoyment of his present happiness, and anticipations of the future, that he *wouldn't* understand. And John Goldsworthy, more clear-sighted, understood thoroughly all that was passing in the young fellow's breast, and liked him all the better for it.

And the afternoon passed, and the gas was lighted, and Knibbs was beginning to get fidgety for the secret to be told; but still John Goldsworthy gave no sign. And tea had been drunk out of Mrs. Knibbs' best old china tea-things, and the piano was opened, and Mrs. Knibbs tried a little song about a violet girl, but broke down, and tried again, and broke down a second time, and everybody laughed (except Walter Arden), and Mrs. Knibbs herself as merrily as anybody. And Mr. Knibbs was all but persuaded into attempting an exhilarating ballad concerning the burial of Sir John Somebody, but thought better of it, and didn't. And then Nelly sat down to the piano and played two or three lively melodies with much grace and execution. And afterwards, at the request of Mr. Brown, Nelly shyly consented to sing a song, and after a few faint chords, began with a sweet, tremulous voice, the 'Light of other days.'

The first notes of his daughter's voice carried John Goldsworthy far back into the past. Nelly was very like her mother; and many a chance look or tone during the afternoon had touched a chord that had been silent for many weary years, and sent a thrill of painful pleasure to her father's heart. Now, however, the familiar notes of Nelly's song, the song which had been the favourite melody of her dead mother, and sung in tones of liquid sweetness almost the counterpart of hers, brought back a very flood of tender recollections; and the strong man bowed his head to the torrent, and shielded his face with his hand, while big tears found their way between the sinewy fingers. Vivid as reality, came the recollection of days long past. As in a mirror rose the vision of himself; not the world-weary, travel-worn man of to-day, but a younger, brighter, happier self; brave and hopeful, dreaming dreams of more than earthly happiness, alas! never to be realised. And then another vision; the image of a gentle maiden with tender, loving eyes; and a warm soft

hand, whose loving pressure had lingered upon his hard palm for years after that hand could press no more; an earnest, trustful heart, with love and confidence unlimited for him; and a low sweet voice which used to croon that dear old melody, in almost the selfsame accents as those which were now raising the ghosts of old memories, and awaking in Eolian strains the echoes of the half-forgotten past. And then a sadder memory, a memory of pain so bitter that it seemed a marvel that a human heart could have borne it, and yet live; a vision of a darkened room, and a bed, where all that was dearest to him on earth lay, waiting the summons that took her from him, and left him in the cold world alone. And a remembrance of the loving hand resting in his on the coverlet, and growing weaker and weaker, till even the last faint pressure ceased; and how, even after the power of speech was lost, the dear eyes looked at him with such ineffable love and tenderness, and the pale lips fashioned themselves for a kiss, and how he bent his lips to hers, and the parting soul breathed itself away in the kiss. And how he could not believe that she was dead; and held the dear hand in his till it grew colder, colder, and colder, and they came and took him away. And after that, all seemed so dark, and cold, and unreal, he could have believed that that alone was reality, and all his subsequent life a shadow and a dream.

And then the song ceased; and the silence seemed to link the present and the past; and John Goldsworthy, with a convulsive sob, flung his arms around his daughter, and held her in a close embrace—'My darling, my darling, my darling!'

Now, to those who were in the secret, this, of course, was precisely the natural and proper thing for John Goldsworthy to do; but a young man who, without any previous preparation, sees his betrothed suddenly and lovingly embraced in the arms of a stranger (particularly if the stranger at the same time calls her his darling), may be forgiven if he exhibits some slight surprise and excitement. Walter Arden had for some time past been working himself up to the conclusion that he wouldn't stand it any longer; and upon this last outrageous demonstration sprang up, choking with passion, and rushed furiously at John Goldsworthy.

'Now, look here, Mr. What's-your-name, I tell you what it is—'

What it was, however, is destined to remain a mystery, for Walter's attention was diverted by Mr. Knibbs pulling

him back by the coat-tails, at the same time assuring him emphatically that it was 'all right.'

'All right! ALL RIGHT!! when your confounded Mr. Brown comes and kisses my Nelly before my face, and you stand there and tell me it's "all right." And Walter viciously pushed back his coat cuffs, preparatory to commencing a fresh onslaught on John Goldsworthy, who, absorbed in his new-found daughter, had not taken the slightest notice of his attack. Knibbs, after endeavouring in vain to hold him back, uttered a last imploring appeal. 'Walter Arden, you wouldn't do an injury to your own father-in-law?'

'Wouldn't I though?' said Walter. 'My *what*?' said he, as the full meaning of Knibbs' sentence dawned upon him.

'Why, Nelly's own father, you stupid boy!' said Mrs. Knibbs; 'come back alive and safe, after all these years. Only to think of it! And you to go hitting him like that! As if you couldn't see it at a glance.'

'Don't be hard upon the boy, Dorothy,' said Knibbs. 'It's all very well for us, who were in the secret; but if I'd been in Walter's place, I dare say I shouldn't have liked it myself. And now I think about the best thing you can do is to get the children to bed.' And the infant Knibbses, who had been deeply interested, and by no means silent spectators, were despatched to bed accordingly.

The principal actors in the domestic drama had been hardly conscious of the bye-play which had been going on around them. Nelly had been at first terrified and indignant to find herself in the embrace of one who till that morning had been an entire stranger; but the few broken words which escaped from John Goldsworthy, aided by the mysterious sympathy which subsists between parent and child, quickly revealed to her the truth; and with her little heart in a flutter of surprise and delight, she clung sobbing to her new-found father, who, on his part, held her enfolded in his arms as though he would never relax his loving embrace.

After the first glad shock of pleasure and surprise, however, all seemed to feel that the time had come for mutual explanations. Walter, who had begun to feel rather uncomfortable as to the consequences of his recent outbreak, commenced a somewhat awkward apology, but was interrupted by Nelly's father, who, offering his hand with a frank smile, put him quite at his ease. Then, seated in an easy chair by the

fireside, with Nelly on a hassock at his feet, her hand clasped lovingly in his, John Goldsworthy commenced the story of his wanderings and adventures. After having run briefly through the events of his life during his long absence, he alluded to his casual meeting with Knibbs, and his subsequent visit to his brother. As he approached this last topic, his face, which had been bright and cheerful during the former part of his recital, subsided into sternness.

'And now, my child,' he said, addressing Nelly with a cold distinctness in his voice which grated unpleasantly upon the ear, 'you have a choice to make; a choice between two alternatives, and I would have you weigh well before you decide. And you too, young sir, you have a voice in this matter. Nelly, you hear the alternative your uncle offers you. He does not merely forgive you, he himself asks your forgiveness; he is willing to remove every obstacle to your wishes; he will enable you at once to marry, and still to hold the position to which you have been accustomed. Lastly, you will inherit the whole of his great wealth. Now for the other alternative. If you elect to share my fortunes, you must be content to face all the discomforts and privations that poverty involves. You will have to take your place in the world as the daughter of a poor man, who must earn his daily bread by the sweat of his brow. And not only a poor man, but a disappointed man, with his heart cankered and his temper soured by misfortune; and rendered wayward and suspicious by intercourse with selfishness and dishonesty. You will have to wait, perhaps for years, before you can hope to be able to marry with the most moderate competence; and when you do, you will in all probability be compelled to content yourself for the whole of your days, at the best, with little more than genteel poverty. I have stated the case fairly, and I would wish you both to give it due consideration before you decide. And for myself' (the hard voice faltered a little), 'for myself, I should wish you, if you can, to put me wholly out of the question. I am fully sensible that, after so long an absence, I cannot expect, and have no right to expect, that I should find in my child's heart the same warm feelings of affection which fathers who have done their duty better, might hope to receive. If you choose the brilliant future which your uncle offers you, I have no reproach to offer you, nor will I say a word against your decision. I will go my way alone,

to begin the world again by myself, and you will see my face no more. Look upon this day as a dream, or a child's story, or what you like. If you choose the other alternative, I have told you what your fortunes will be. Mr. Arden, I look to you to assist my daughter in her choice.'

Nelly turned to Walter, but with little look in her bright face of hesitation or asking for advice, 'Well, Walter, what am I to say?'

'If you hesitated for a moment, my darling, you would be no Nelly of mine.'

'I do not,' she said, simply. 'Papa, my choice is made.' And with smiles and tears struggling for the mastery, Nelly threw herself into her father's arms. The look which came over his face was like sunshine breaking through a cloud.

'Pure gold!' he said, half aloud. 'Thank God, pure gold!'

'And my choice, too, sir,' said Walter Arden, 'since you are so good as to allow me any in the matter. Nelly and I are young and can afford to wait; but if the day we both hope for should never come, we would not hasten it at such a price as you suggest. At any rate we are no worse off than we were before, though I must say I don't look at things quite so gloomily as you do. With such a prize to work for, I feel as if I could do wonders; and it shall go hard but we will fight our way and manage to carry light hearts too.'

'Thanks, my boy,' said John Goldsworthy, shaking his hand warmly. 'God bless you both, my children, and grant that you never regret your choice!'

Mr. and Mrs. Knibbs, during this conversation, had been by no means uninterested. The tender-hearted Dorothy sobbed undisturbedly, while dear old Matthew, the transparent old impostor, pretended to look as if he didn't mind; but was put to shame and confusion by discovering that the children had hidden his silk pocket handkerchief, and was compelled to rub his eyes with his sleeve.

The party sat and chatted for some time longer; when after a longer pause than usual, during which Nelly had been thoughtfully gazing into the fire, John Goldsworthy bent over and kissed her forehead, saying, 'In the land of dreams, Nelly mine? I wonder where my little girl's thoughts are wandering.'

Nelly looked up with a bright flush, and a wistful look in her soft eyes. 'Papa, I want you to do something that will make me very happy.'

'What is it, my darling?'

'I want you to be friends with Uncle Robert.'

A look as of pain came over John Goldsworthy's features, and then his face hardened into the stern look again. 'My darling, I cannot. Perhaps some day I may forgive him in my heart, but I can never look upon him as a brother or as a friend again.'

'But, papa, we are so very, very happy, and he is so miserable. And he was very kind to me, until I made him angry; indeed he was, you don't know how kind; I'm sure I forgive him with all my heart.'

'If I may say a word, Mr. John,' said Knibbs, 'I'm sure he has been severely punished. Ever since that day he has not been the same man. He has aged more in the last few months than he had before for several years. Of course if I had seen the advertisement I should have told him that our dear young lady was safe in our keeping, but he never spoke of the subject himself, and I was afraid to mention it to him first. He's a proud man, sir, and won't let people see all he feels, but he has suffered much.'

'Knibbs, I cannot hear more—I can allow no man to be judge between me and my brother. If he has suffered he has brought his misery upon his own head, and he must bear it best as he may.'

'But, papa, it would make me so happy!'

'My darling, what you ask is impossible. And now let me beg that all present will consider this subject as one not to be mentioned between us. Let me be understood. Anyone who brings it up again will be no friend of mine.'

There was a silence. All felt that no more could be said, but a damp had been cast upon the perfect happiness of the party, and for some time no one seemed inclined to speak. After one or two fruitless attempts to recall the lively tone of the conversation, Knibbs, in accordance with time-honoured custom, opened the old Family Bible, and took his place at the table, while the party grouped themselves around, to join in family prayer. First, led by Nelly's fresh clear voice, they sang the joyful Christmas hymn; and then old Matthew, with homely eloquence, read a chapter from the sacred book. The passage he selected was that in which the fiery Peter asks how often an erring brother should be forgiven, and the meek Master makes the memorable answer, 'I say not unto thee, Until seven times, but until seventy times seven.' An angry feeling of indignation and offended pride arose in John Goldsworthy's breast, as he realised the application of the lesson to himself, but soon, as he perceived how



humbly and timidly the old man read, a better feeling prevailed. After the reading came a homely but earnest prayer, and then *The Prayer*—the prayer that has been prayed by Christian lips for eighteen hundred years. There was a tremble in the old man's voice, a tone of more than ordinarily earnest pleading, as he came to the familiar words, 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us,' and when the prayer was ended, and all the others had risen, John Goldsworthy remained upon his knees, his face buried in his hands. And when he rose, he held out his hand to Matthew Knibbs, 'Old friend, with God's help, you have conquered me. And you, my darling, if it will really make you happy that I should make friends with your uncle, I have made up my mind that I will make friends with him.'

Nelly's sweet face brightened into sunshine, and she clapped her hands with delight. 'I feel such deep and perfect happiness myself, that I seem as if I dare not enjoy it, knowing my brother to be suffering so deeply. And now that I have made up my mind, I will not rest until the thing is done. So, my darling, if it is not too late for you, put on your bonnet, and we will go to your uncle at once.'

'At once! to-night! Oh papa, I'm so very, very glad! My dear, dear, dear papa!' And flinging her arms round his neck, she gave him such kisses! For my part, I'd have forgiven my lawyer himself (who is my only enemy that I can think of), for only just one of them.

The tall footman's astonishment at seeing his young mistress arrive at such an hour, and in the company of the individual who had made so unceremonious a visit on the previous night, was unbounded. He had little time, however, to indulge it, for Nelly merely said, 'I shall find my uncle in the library, I suppose, Thomas?' and passing across the hall, the two entered unannounced.

Robert Goldsworthy was seated in an easy chair by the fireside, his back to the door. Choice fruits and sparkling decanters were on the table, but untouched as when they were first placed there after his solitary dinner. He was changed, even since the previous night. The worn, nervous, restless look had deepened into one of utter dejection and despair. Even his very attitude, as he gazed into the fire, his head bent down, and his hand hanging nerveless over the side of his elbow-chair, seemed to denote a broken-spirited man, without aim and without hope in the world. He did not

turn his head when the door opened, but remained listlessly gazing with the same cold dull stare into vacancy. Nelly loosened the strings of her bonnet, flung it aside, and stepping forward, knelt down by her uncle's chair, whilst her soft ringlets swept his thin hand,—'Uncle.'

Robert Goldsworthy seemed but slowly to realize her presence. The slow frightened way in which he turned his head towards her, and the nervous shaking of his trembling fingers, spoke volumes of what he must have suffered, and John Goldsworthy's heart smote him, that he should have added ought to so great an agony.

'Nelly! come back?'

'Yes, dear uncle, your own Nelly, once more. And I have brought some one else too, who wishes to be friends with you if you will let him.'

Robert Goldsworthy looked up, and for the first time perceived his brother's presence. With hands outstretched, he essayed to rise, but the excitement had been too great for his enfeebled strength, and he staggered back into his chair.

John Goldsworthy stepped forward, and knelt before his brother, grasping his hands in his. 'Brother Robert, we have both forgiveness to exchange. I give you mine with all my heart, and I ask you to forgive me the hard words I spoke last night, and to take me to your heart as your brother again; and this dear child, who has divided us for a moment, shall be your daughter as well as mine, and make Christmas in our hearts, our whole lives long.'

Peace and goodwill! Peace and goodwill! sing the Christmas chimes.

And so they lived happy ever afterwards? Of course they did; can you possibly have the impertinence to doubt it? And would you believe it, John Goldsworthy's story of being a poor man turned out to be all a pretence, made up by 'a nasty, great, ugly, suspicious darling of a papa'—(Mrs. Arden is responsible for the strong language)—'just to test his little daughter's heart, which proved in the right place, you see, after all; and, which is still more remarkable, nobody seemed to dislike him a bit more for being a millionaire. And 'Goldsworthy Brothers' is now 'Goldsworthy Brothers and Co.,' and Mat Knibbs and Walter Arden are Co. And the whole firm of Goldsworthy Brothers and Co., together with Mrs. Knibbs and a lot of young Knibbises and little Ardens, always spend Christmas Day together, and a remarkable jolly party they make. And that's all I know about it.

A. J. L.



## SIR GILBERT DE ROCHFORD:

*A Christmas Tale of a Singular Meeting.*

EVERYBODY wondered why Sir Gilbert de Rochfort had never married—that is, society wondered—for domestic ties or intimate friends were alike unknown to him, and none of his acquaintances would have ventured, even in an unguarded moment, to step over the boundary line which reticence draws between a man's inner and his outer self.

He possessed, indeed, that reserved, proud nature from which more open and genial tempers recede, like the backward ebb of the sea at low tide. He was not, however, difficult to get in with, up to a certain point. As a citizen of the world, and in the action of buffeting with its rough waves, he had worn off those outward angles and projections which in a home-bred man would have become unpleasantly prominent. He was eminently agreeable, and a brilliant, but not an overpowering talker, when society demanded of him that his talent should be so employed. With all the attractions of person and advantages of wealth, added to these other gifts, it did indeed seem perverse of him to keep them all to himself.

During the ten years that he had resided at Hilden, a shooting-box (to which he had come, in the first instance, with the intention of remaining a week), not even rumour, with her hundred tongues, had been able to endow him with a probable bride.

The society of women, especially that of the fairest and youngest members of the community, he seemed almost intentionally to avoid, notwithstanding the encouraging smiles bestowed upon him by mothers who had daughters to marry, and by daughters who had mothers to please.

He was essentially what they at last despondingly pronounced him to be—'a man's man.' He liked to collect around him, in his bachelor home, those who, like himself, delighted in the manly sports and pastimes so dear to the heart of each true-born Englishman, and in all of which Sir Gilbert himself more or less excelled.

A splendid horseman and a keen shot, he raised the emulation of the younger men, who looked upon him as the type of what a country gentleman should be; and at Hilden such a picture of luxurious bachelorhood was presented for the contemplation of the rising generation, that it was hardly

to be wondered at that the saying passed into a proverb, that 'Angleshire was not a marrying county.'

There was one noticeable peculiarity with regard to the winter hospitalities at Hilden. During the Christmas season it was shut up, and Sir Gilbert disappeared from the county, acquainting nobody with his possible or probable whereabouts, until the gaieties and reunions of families, attendant upon that festive season, were well over.

It was, therefore, with much surprise that the members of Mrs. Standish's family listened to that lady's announcement, as she sealed the most delicate and fairy-like of notes, with the most delicate and fairy-like of seals: 'I have written to ask Sir Gilbert de Rochfort to spend Christmas with us, and I have a sort of presentiment that he will come.'

'Sir Gilbert de Rochfort, my dearest auntie,' exclaimed Alice Vendamere, the beauty, niece, and pet of the establishment; 'then there is an end to all our fun. I have always called him Knight Sintram since the day when Lady Bouncington and her five plain daughters bore down upon him at the Mentreon archery meeting. You know why, Ernie,' she added, smiling archly at the guileless youth of eighteen, whom she had had fast in her toils since the archery meeting in question had taken place the summer before. 'Don't you remember my whispering to you, "The she bear and her whelps are upon him?" which I was obliged to do, because you would not have understood the German, and it was so sweetly appropriate.'

'I remember your saying it, and I remember the argument we had afterwards, when I said that he was an awfully good fellow, and you said that he was as sulky as a bear himself, and that it would serve him right if the she bear caught him, and gave him as a dainty morsel to that unmitigated Gorgon, the Lady Ethelfrida Malmesdon.'

'So I did, and I wish she had,' answered the merry girl. 'But seriously, dear Aunt Fanny, what could have put it into your head to invite such a regular damp blanket to come to weigh down our Christmas fun? Let me put the note in the fire, please,' she added coquettishly; 'that is, if you think there's the slightest chance of his accepting the invitation, you know.'

'No, my love, the note must be sent,' replied Mrs. Standish, decidedly. 'I

have long had it in my conscience that year after year should have gone by and seen our merry Christmas gathering, while our next-door neighbour was moping by himself in some out-of-the-way corner, without a soul to speak to. Let James take the roan horse over to Hilden,' she added, as the butler answered the bell, 'and let him wait for an answer to this note.'

There was 'awful excitement, as the young people themselves would have expressed it, until the tramp of the roan horse in the stable-yard proclaimed the return of the groom. And when Ernest entered holding the note high above his head, those who had betted gloves and knick-knacks upon the issue of the event, felt as those feel when settling-day is close at hand.

'He comes! he comes!' shouted a voice, which proceeded from behind the sofa on which Mrs. Standish was reclining. 'Knight Sintram comes,' and nothing was heard for a few minutes afterwards, but, 'You owe me two pair of gloves; my size is six and three-quarters.' 'I know Cousin Alice always wears orange cotton.' 'What a shame!' 'You said "done,"' 'I should like white ones with two buttons, et cetera, et cetera.' When the tumult was over, there was still the cry of 'What does he say? Please tell us what he says, Aunt Fanny.' And the kindhearted woman, with tears standing in her eyes, prefaced the reading of the note by saying, 'It was as I thought; not one of the county families have ever before asked him to spend Christmas with them. And he concludes with—"and to my own hearth, barren and desolate of any domestic tie, I had no heart to summon them."'

'I am so glad I thought of it,' she added, with a sigh of relief—and the next thing to think about is, who to have to meet him. It will not do to have nothing but you young creatures about. Sir Gilbert de Rochfort is a middle-aged man.'

'There is the pretty widow, Mrs. Stuart,' suggested some one among the young creatures alluded to. 'She sings so well, she would be an acquisition every way.'

'So she would; that is a bright idea; sit down, Alice, and write her a note, and be sure and mention that I am expecting Sir Gilbert; it is the sort of thing to draw with a widow.'

'She's not that sort of widow,' said one of the nephews, who coloured deeply as he made the remark; 'she's the nicest woman I ever knew, and not in the least like what one fancies a widow would be.'

'Why Frank's quite spoony on her,' said a younger brother, chaffingly; 'he was always at the cottage, when we were at home; but I never thought of there being an attraction in that quarter.'

'Don't be a fool,' was the crusty reply; and the dressing-bell ringing at that moment, the ladies dispersed, to talk over the events of the day, during the performance of manifold manipulations with regard to their 'back hair;' in some cases so thick and luxuriant, that ingenuity was expended in compressing it into graceful compass; in others so scanty and thin as to require the aid of many frizzes, rolls, and whiskers (ladies, am I right?) to give it the required roundness or solidity of form.

Little Alice Vendamere was an only child; her rippling auburn tresses owed their dainty arrangement to no kind sisterly hand, and as she sat silent and thoughtful under the hands of her maid, and caught the reflection of a lovely face in the glass, perhaps the question suggested itself to her youthful imagination, 'I wonder what Knight Sintram will think of me.'

She had been a spoilt darling all her life, and, like other spoilt darlings, had learnt to think too exclusively of her own little self, to be a perfect or a beautiful character. But she was very pretty, very fascinating, and very caressing in her manner when she liked; and therefore no one perceived the undercurrent of selfishness which was moulding the child nature into that of a finished coquette. When the toilette was completed, and she surveyed herself in the cheval glass before her, it would be a betrayal of confidence to say what she thought of herself. If Sir Gilbert's opinion should prove half as flattering, the question will soon be answered, 'What will he think of me?'

And the widow? had the 'world's breath been there' also? had the boy's judgment, or the world's judgment, been right in the case? Was the name of the rich baronet a 'safe draw' in that quarter or not?

We had hoped not—we had heard better things of her; but Mary Stuart, like her great namesake, was fallible, and a victim to the weaknesses of her sex. As her eye glanced over the note written in the delicate characters of Alice Vendamere, they lighted upon the words 'Sir Gilbert de Rochfort has promised to come;' and as it did so such a blush spread itself over the widow's fair face, and such a light

flushed in her beautiful eyes, that we cannot but fear that the question suggested itself to the mature mind, which the childish one had proposed: 'I wonder what he will think of me?'

Having so far let the reader into the secret of two feminine hearts, and admitted him behind the scenes, we must beg him to return once more to his place among the audience, and see the 'farce played out.'

The Christmas week arrived, and Sir Gilbert de Rochfort arrived at Mount Pleasant, as well as the pretty widow, Mrs. Stuart. They were the only two guests who were not allied personally or by marriage to the family circle assembled there; and it must be acknowledged that they both did justice to the discriminating taste of their hostess; for they were both possessed of the brilliant qualities which are necessary to make a party in a country house go off pleasantly and well.

Fair Mrs. Stuart did not, as her young champion had observed, give any one the idea of a widow 'in the world's sense.' Perhaps because gay, gadding, designing widows are, for the most part, the widows who come into notice in the world, the world has got into the habit of judging of them, as a class, a little censoriously.

Now that we have had the opportunity (alas! that it should be so) of seeing how a widow at heart can, even in the most illustrious position, make her pious example and faithful love a beacon light to an admiring world, the name should be held in greater reverence, and enlist a larger amount of sympathy for its owner than it has hitherto done. Owning ourselves, however, to a preconceived aversion to the name, when applied to a young and pretty woman, the centre of an admiring circle of friends and acquaintances, with no disinclination on her part to the rôle that she plays, we will drop the opprobrious title altogether, and mention her for the future merely as Mrs., or as she liked best to be called, 'Mary Stuart.'

A pretty and suggestive name enough; but not too pretty or too suggestive to belong to so fair and winning a creature as the namesake of the unfortunate Queen of Scots. She had lately arrived in the neighbourhood, and had taken a pretty cottage, about six miles from the county town; but people had not failed to discern, even in those early days, that she was a great 'acquisition,' and that her acquaintance was one to cultivate.

Like Sir Gilbert de Rochfort, how-

ever, she had made no intimate friends; and an elderly French woman, who had formerly been her governess, appeared to be the only person who enjoyed her perfect confidence and trust.

The little mystery that surrounded her history and antecedents could never be misinterpreted by those who had once seen and conversed with Mrs. Stuart or Madame Ruedecour, her companion and friend. They were both highly cultivated women, with that unmistakable stamp which true refinement sets upon the really noble, among the high born and well bred of their sex.

Like a queen rose, indeed, she seemed amongst the lovely 'garden of girls' assembled at Mount Pleasant to hold Christmas revel beneath its hospitable roof. Her dark clustering hair, and the peach-like bloom of her cheeks, bore witness to the fact, that youth was not past; and the most invidious of observers could not have guessed her age to be more than thirty at the most.—'Thirty, however,' we hear a fair young reader exclaim, 'can hardly be called young.'

Granted—if you will; but there is a charm about thirty, nevertheless; and a beautiful woman of thirty is in the height and the zenith of her charms.

Even little Alice trembled for her beauty laurels, as Mrs. Stuart entered the drawing-room, accompanied by the venerable Madame Ruedecour, who looked like a comtesse of the old French régime. They were two remarkable looking women, and the younger was a model of grace, founded upon self-possession, and the inborn consciousness of sway. The pretty girl of eighteen, with a dash of fastness in her own manners, felt that she was outshone, that her beauty-throne was already in the possession of the new comer; and as her golden tresses were being combed out that evening, her thoughts took another and a less pleasing shape. They were not, what will Sir Gilbert think of me? but what will he think of *her*?—for she knew intuitively that when Mrs. Stuart was in the room she would pale the light of the lesser luminaries, who might each have shone before as suns and planets in their own limited spheres.

Sir Gilbert de Rochfort, or, as the young people insisted upon calling him, 'Knight Sintram,' was expected to dinner, and a sumptuous banquet had been prepared in his honour.

'We must make a fuss with him,' said the notable housewife, 'and give

him of the very best, since he has treated us with such distinguished attention. It will make the county mad, I know, to think of his having spent his Christmas with us.'

To explain this speech on the part of one of the most good-natured little women that ever breathed, it will be necessary to inform the reader that 'the county' had (with a prejudice and narrowness of mind peculiar to the moral growth of some counties that we could name) made Mrs. Standish more than ever understand, that she was looked upon in the light of a *parvenue*. Rich and agreeable, doubtless, but not as a dowager countess of the old school emphatically declared in her hearing, 'not one of us.' Hence the innocent triumph over 'the county' evinced in her last speech, seeing that the most distinguished unit in that select assembly would have been proud to number Sir Gilbert de Rochfort among his Christmas guests.

There was a little nervous flutter about Mrs. Standish's manner, therefore, as she was led into dinner by the baronet himself; but reassured by the courteous ease of his conversation, and the evident interest he took in the programme of their Christmas festivities, she was soon eagerly describing to him the parts that the different members of her family were to take in the charades and tableaux which were to form a principal feature in them.

'And Mrs. Stuart has promised to personate her beautiful namesake for us,' she said; 'will she not look splendid, as the principal figure in the scene of the murder of Rizzio?'

'Splendid indeed! if you refer to the lady whom your husband took into dinner,' was the reply, as his eye followed that of his hostess, and rested upon the lovely face of Mary Stuart herself.

'I do; have you not met Mrs. Stuart before, Sir Gilbert? she has lately come into the neighbourhood, and is a great attraction, I assure you.'

'Doubtless,' was the curt reply. He had been surprised into admiration by the first appeal; but female charms seldom formed the subject of comment or remark to the eccentric baronet.

There was a little ear by his side, pricked into the most earnest attention to every sentence that fell from his lips, and that ear belonged to no other than the beauty, Alice Vendamere; she heard that cold 'doubtless' with a little sigh of relief. She could not bear to hear another woman cordially praised; and she had conceived a dis-

like to Mrs. Stuart from the moment that she had first seen her. She had ardently hoped that Sir Gilbert would address some conversation to herself, and had manoeuvred to sit next to him in order to accomplish her purpose. He seemed blind and deaf, however, as regarded her presence there; and with the exception of a remark addressed to her on the subject of a fan, artfully dropped as the ladies rose from the table, he spoke no word to her that night.

'How charming he is!' exclaimed Mrs. Standish excitedly, as they stood round the Christmas fire, and discussed the hero of the day. 'I had no idea that he could be so agreeable.'

As she said the words, two deep-blue violet eyes turned softly upon her, and fixed her with a puzzled look.

'Is Sir Gilbert de Rochfort, then, not generally considered agreeable?' the owner of the eyes asked, with a slightly upward tendency in the arched eyebrow—'I had understood the reverse.'

'To men particularly so; but the society of women he is supposed to forswear.'

'He is what I called him, a damp blanket at best,' remarked Alice Vendamere, with a dash of spite in her accent. 'I almost begin to wish that he had not come.'

As this sentence fell from her lips, she also encountered the gaze of the violet eyes, and in this case it was accompanied by a slight curl of the short upper lip, which gave such classical grace to the countenance to which it belonged. Alice observed this fact; and it did not induce to the rise of Mrs. Stuart in her affections or estimation, especially as the latter vouchsafed no remark in answer to the saucy girl.

Later in the evening, music was asked for, and Alice, as the nearest relation to the lady of the house, was requested to open the concert.

She played brilliantly, and had been well taught; but on the night in question she appeared a little nervous and perturbed, which was unusual with her; and her furtive glance round the room as she rose from the piano and received her gloves, fan, and handkerchief from her attendant cavaliers, showed that she was anxious that some one favoured individual should have heard her sparkling performance. If she looked for Sir Gilbert de Rochfort she looked in vain; he was in the inner drawing-room talking earnestly to a low-browed, thick-set man, who was describing a run with the Anglethire foxhounds, a day or two back, at which the baronet had not been present.

Breaking with some little difficulty from the clutches of the most confirmed and the dreariest story-teller in the county, Sir Gilbert approached the charmed circle of girls that was nearest to him, apparently in an absent and preoccupied frame of mind.

The pretty creatures looked flutteringly up at him, as a brood of chickens might have gazed at an approaching hawk, and each one secretly hoped that Knight Sintram would not take it into his head to address her in particular, for they were of the schoolgirl age, too forcibly suggestive, as Lord Byron says, of 'bread and butter,' to be interested in, or as far as that interesting to, a middle-aged male stranger.

'I heard music, I am sure, young ladies,' he said with a smile, which in some measure allayed their fears; 'can you inform me from whence came the strains?'

'Miss Vendamere has been playing,' replied the least shy of the bevy of maidens, 'and now Mrs. Standish is asking Mrs. Stuart to sing.'

To ask was to obtain in that quarter. Mrs. Stuart was one of the few people to whom the gift of music was unalloyed pleasure to herself and to others. She never allowed any idle or frivolous excuse to deprive people of the enjoyment of her rare and exquisite talent, and with the fine perceptions of real good-breeding, what she intended to give she did not require to be twice asked for.

'It will give me great pleasure to sing, if you wish it,' she said simply, in reply to Mrs. Standish's request; and as she was a comparative stranger in the Christmas circle which she had so cordially joined, few among the guests assembled knew the rich treat in store for their willing ears, that those words implied.

Here were none of the Missyish preparations for display, so often lingered over to conceal the nervous flutterings of the fair performer. No fidgeting with bracelets, no 'looking for music,' no raising or lowering of the music-stool, or placing and displacing of wax candles. Mrs. Stuart took her place at the instrument, over which she was a complete mistress, with confidence and ease, and after prelude in a way which in itself was delightful to a connoisseur, she carried her hearers away with her into the regions of fancy, on the wings of her beautiful and silvery voice.

'One more,' and again 'only one more,' was asked for and obtained; and for the very last, in accordance with

the special request of Sir Gilbert, Mrs. Stuart sang the following ballad, for the melancholy tone of which she requested indulgence at so festive a season. 'It is a favourite of mine,' she added, with one of her peculiar and most gracious smiles; and this was enough to secure its favourable reception by her now enraptured audience.

The words of a song, without music or voice to give them soul and life, might be compared to an outlined sketch without colour or shade; but as even an outline in some cases might suggest both, to an imaginative temperament, so the simple words of a ballad will sometimes fall naturally to music, to those who love their happy combination. The words Mrs. Stuart sang were these:—

'He comes to-night!' the lady said,  
And twined amidst her hair  
The sweet blue-eyed forget-me-not,  
To make her yet more fair.

'He comes to-night. Sir Roland comes,  
Who, in the lists of love—  
Has worn within his haughty crest  
My pearl-embroidered glove.

'He comes to-night across the moor,  
And down the mountain steep;  
And through the sharp and rocky glen,  
Where yawns the lover's leap.

'He comes to night!' FAlas! no more—  
Sad lady, cease thy lay.  
But still she said, 'He comes to-night'  
Through each succeeding day.

And ever when the sun went down,  
Lapped in the golden west,  
She bade her bower-maidens bring  
The robe he loved the best.

And still she said, 'He comes to-night'  
And twined within her hair  
The sweet blue-eyed forget-me-not,  
To make her seem more fair.

'Forget thee not!' came o'er her face—  
A flushing and a light—  
And ere her sweet eyes closed she said,  
'I come, dear love, to-night.'

The murmur of applause which followed all the fair performer's songs came a little slower than usual after this one. Perhaps each of her audience was hoping that another would speak, and allow time for the slight feeling of choking that was arising in his or her throat to allay itself, before attempting to make comment or remark.

The silence was first broken by Sir Gilbert, who, to the surprise of those to whom his hermit-like habits with regard to women were well known, said, offering his arm to the fair musician, 'Do come and have some tea. I could

hear that you were a little tired in that last song; and I fear that we have taxed your good-nature too severely.' 'No, indeed,' was the reply; 'I feel that little song very much; but nothing would tire me to-night. It is the first Christmas-eve that I have spent in a home circle for many a long year.'

'I can say the same,' replied Sir Gilbert, 'but I cannot, like you, admit that I altogether look upon the Christmas season as a festive one. There is something inexpressibly sad to me in Christmas memories, and your plaintive song has called some of them back to life again.'

Surely some unlooked-for emotion must have surprised Sir Gilbert from his icy reserve; he had never spoken so many consecutive words with regard to his own personal feelings, as he had spoken to Mrs. Stuart that night, within the memory of Angleshire.

She answered softly, 'Neither are Christmas memories particularly bright ones to me; but I am determined to shake off all morbid feelings, and be happy for this once.'

Sir Gilbert made no reply, but he looked pale and thoughtful for the rest of the evening. There is something in the tone of her voice, he was thinking to himself, that brings back a long-lost one to my mind. It is like the voice of 'my wife.'

If his thoughts could have been as easily interpreted by those with whom he was mingling as they are rendered here upon paper, what consternation might they not have caused throughout the neighbourhood and the county; no one had ever heard before that Sir Gilbert de Rochfort was a married man.

What chance now for little Alice with her doll's beauty, or for the enchantress with her siren voice! Well was it for Sir Gilbert that the observation escaped him not; the smiles of the beauty, and the voice of the siren, will still in their ignorance be directed to him. It will be as well to mention here that Sir Gilbert de Rochfort had a seat, or rather castle, called Rochfort Castle, situated in the north of England, and that rumour had said that his life there had been one of the deepest seclusion, almost amounting to complete isolation.

Was it possible, after all, that some fair Amy Robsart pined in those distant towers for her lord's return? Such things have been heard of before; but if it were indeed the case in this instance, the secret had been well kept; the shafts of scandal had never as yet

been launched against the unblemished honour of Sir Gilbert de Rochfort.

The tongues of gossip were, however, soon let loose as his admiration of the fair Mary gained ground daily, and as evening after evening found him at her side, an entranced listener to her heavenly voice. The night before the break-up of the party she had worn in her hair some holly berries with which he had presented her, saying, as he did so, 'I shall love Christmas and holly berries from this time forth, and for ever. Perhaps, however,' he added, with an effort, 'I may never see another in England. I am going abroad next week.'

'Is not that a somewhat sudden determination?' said his companion, with forced calmness, while her face belied the assumed indifference of her voice. 'I thought you were talking of a visit to Rochfort.'

'Will you give me an interview to-morrow, before I go? I have a history that I wish you to hear.'

'Yes,' said Mary Stuart, quietly. 'I also would speak with you. I have a message for you from Virginie,' she added, and her voice here was broken with a sob.

To explain how this message was likely to affect Sir Gilbert de Rochfort, now madly in love with another woman, it will be necessary to take the reader back for the space of ten years, when another Christmas scene was taking place, on which the after events of his life all hinged.

An aged man, a former Sir Gilbert de Rochfort, lay a dying in a princely chamber, furnished after the fashion of two centuries ago. He was, even in death, a hard, determined-looking man; and if the lawyer who sat at the bed's head, busily engaged in writing, ventured to question the expediency of such or such a clause in the old man's will, his remarks were met by the stern reiteration of what had been before said, without other comment upon the interruption offered.

'Gilbert can take his choice,' he said, as the lawyer at last ceased to write; 'he can obey me or not as he thinks fit; but my determination will remain unchanged.'

'But, Sir Gilbert,' said the lawyer, pleadingly, 'there is the young lady to consult as well as your nephew. She will hardly be prepared to comply with your wishes at once, even should Mr. Gilbert prove as dutiful in the matter as I hope he will. But that other unfortunate attachment—that most unfortunate attachment will, I fear—'



'Have the kindness to write at my dictation,' broke in the old man, angrily. 'I have neither time nor inclination to discuss the love affairs of my worthy nephew: the will must be made in case of his persistent refusal.'

So the lawyer, who loved the scapegrace nephew with all his heart, had to drive his unwilling pen to the certain worldly ruin of that nephew, in case of his declining to fulfil the conditions imposed by an obstinate man, rendered doubly exacting and imperious from the knowledge that the power which he then possessed was passing quickly and surely out of his hands for ever.

The business which occupied the baronet and the lawyer lasted some hours, after which Sir Gilbert, the great-uncle of the Sir Gilbert already brought before the attention of the reader, gave orders that his nephew should be summoned to his presence, and in the mean time the man of law sought an interview with Mademoiselle Virginie de St. Cyrs, the daughter of a French marquis and his English wife, who had been the favourite sister of the dying baronet.

It was in favour of this young lady that the will had been made, which was intended to come into force only upon the refusal of the young couple to unite the interests and the glory of their house by becoming man and wife before the death of the present possessor. The nephew, Gilbert, was the natural heir to the princely Rochfort estates, but the entail had been cut off by an ancestor whose eldest son had incurred his displeasure, and it was in the power of Sir Gilbert de Rochfort to will them to any member of the family that it pleased him to do. This was the imperative condition, and the house of de Rochfort had become so impoverished of its members that it so happened that either to Gilbert or to Virginie they must come.

In case of the refusal of the young man to obey his uncle's commands, the whole of the vast property would be left to the young girl; and it was curious enough that her wishes on the subject were neither canvassed or even thought of by the imperious old man, who looked upon her as entirely and completely subject to his will in all things, and at whose natural rebellion to the course he did not even guess.

'If Gilbert consents to marry her he shall be my heir,' was the wording of the conditions imposed; and the lawyer was charged with the delicate mission of imparting to Virginie that she was offered as a valuable bargain for the acceptance of one whose heart and af-

fections, she well knew, were bestowed upon a far less worthy or beautiful object.

She and her cousin had, indeed, seen little of one another since the days of comparative childhood, when Gilbert had acted the part of boy lover to his fair and delicate playmate. When they met again he was in the heyday of youthful passion, inspired with an ardent attachment to a beautiful actress, who led him on to swell the train of her captive admirers, but who, not long before the events took place which have been above described, had thrown him over in the most heartless and deliberate manner, and bestowed upon an unsuspected rival the doubtful blessing of her hand. Gilbert, therefore, as might be imagined, was in no matrimonial mood, and the coarseness of the mind which could conceive the idea of flinging his young cousin into his arms against her own inclination and his, was hateful and revolting to his chivalric nature. He was but a man, however, and a proud and ambitious one to boot; the alternative, therefore, of absolute beggary, as opposed to the possession of the vast revenues of the house of de Rochfort, presented a barren picture to an imagination already soured and humiliated by disappointment.

The interview with his uncle proved a stormy one. He absolutely refused to speak to Virginie the words of insult which such a proposal implied, and the old man swore a terrible oath, that unless the pair were united in marriage in his presence, before his death, that the noble inheritance should pass into female hands, and the hopes of Gilbert be blighted and destroyed in this world for ever. The young man went from his uncle's presence pale with the passionate emotion which shook him to the very soul.

His uncle's life, like the flickering of a spent flame, might go out at any moment, and he be turned a beggar from the halls of his fathers, whose patrimony he had been taught to look upon as his own. Until the unfortunate attachment above alluded to had come to his uncle's ears he had had no thought of disowning or of disinheriting him; but the pride of blood revolted at the projected *mésalliance*, and the object of his life had since been to see Gilbert and Virginie united in matrimonial bonds.

His health had given way suddenly, or his object might have been achieved in the natural course of events. Virginie was a girl of rare perfections, both of

mind and person, and her soothing influence over the fiery temperament of her cousin Gilbert might, in due time, have borne blossom and fruit. The one fact that stood between her and her uncle's entire devotion was the fact of her religion. *Virginie de St. Cyr* had been brought up in her father's faith, and was a Roman Catholic from education and choice. Nothing could shake her religious principles, and this was as gall and wormwood to the soul of *Sir Gilbert* when he thought of her as the heiress of *Rochfort*.

When the keen-sighted lawyer sought the interview with the beautiful and dignified maiden upon a mission of such delicacy, he himself saw no way out of the toils which destiny was drawing round *Gilbert* the heir.

To urge *Virginie* to a hasty marriage with a cold and unwilling bridegroom, he had it not in his heart to do; to cast away the last chance for the heirship of the young man, whom he loved as his own son, wrung his heart to the core. He resolved to explain as simply, and with as little circumlocution as possible, the wishes of the dying man; entertaining, unknown to himself, the latent hope, that the much-vaunted wit and readiness of the fairer sex would help him out of the labyrinth in some unforeseen and marvellous manner.

He waited reverently, and with averted gaze, for the answer to the message of which he had been the unwilling bearer; and the calm voice of the young girl startled him more than the most passionate demonstration of anger on her part would have done, as she said distinctly and slowly, but in a low voice—

'What does *Gilbert*—my cousin, say to this proposal?'

'He is at this moment with *Sir Gilbert*, the lawyer replied, and added with some hesitation; 'you are, I think, acquainted with his unfortunate history.'

'I am indeed; and I pity him from my very heart; in addition to his other sorrows, to lose his rightful inheritance; it would be a cruel wrong; it would be an act of which I cannot believe my uncle to be really capable.'

'It is, alas! too true. *Mademoiselle*, I assure you that the will is made, which, in case of your mutual refusal to comply with his demands, will come into force at the decease of the present baronet.'

'And to whom, in such a case, will the property go?'

'Is it possible, *Mademoiselle*, that you are ignorant, that in such an emer-

gency, you are appointed sole heiress to the *Rochfort* estates, and that *Gilbert* will inherit nothing but the barren title, of which his uncle cannot indeed deprive him?'

'God forbid, sir! you cannot know of what you speak,' exclaimed *Virginie*, with sudden eagerness, and with the foreign accent, which came back to her in moments of excitement, like the 'à moi mes Français' of the unfortunate queen.

'It is true, nevertheless,' replied the lawyer, gazing with unfeigned admiration on the kindling eyes and passionate renunciation of her inheritance; 'it is too true; for (and with all honour to yourself, *Mademoiselle*, I speak it) *Gilbert* is the rightful heir; we must try to prevent this great wrong, but I confess to you, every path open to us appears to me to present some unsurmountable difficulty.'

*Virginie* was silent for a moment or two after this appeal, and a deep overwhelming colour spread itself over her fair brow, before she gathered resolution to answer. As she did so, however, she raised her eyes to the lawyer's face, to disarm, as it were, all harsh or unfavourable judgment, and to allow her soul to be read in its virginal piety and purity by him whom she addressed.

'Is not my cousin aware,' she said, 'that as for me, I am the destined bride of heaven?—that, even were we to go through the ceremony that my uncle demands, that I would trouble him no more for ever? He shall secure his inheritance, and his bride be no more than a name. Upon these conditions, I for my part am willing to stand at his side in the presence of my uncle, and whilst I vow myself outwardly to *Gilbert*, will make my vows in secret to the heaven that I serve.'

'But, *Mademoiselle*,' said the lawyer, seeing that she waited for a reply, and pale with apprehension at the daring flight of *Virginie*'s imagination, 'how can I recommend a course involving on your part such a noble self-sacrifice? You propose to immure yourself for life in a convent, to become a wife only in name, to (excuse the word, but it appears to me the only one which I can adapt to the occasion) deceive your uncle, and resort to a subterfuge which is unworthy of *Mademoiselle de Saint-Cyr*. I know not what to do, what to advise; and yet,' he added, 'it is a noble idea, and worthy of you when viewed in another light.'

'In the right light,' replied *Virginie*, with a holy calm in her eyes. The dogmas of the faith which she possessed

had taught her that there was no sin in doing evil that good might come; and her conscience was as clear as her heart was innocent and pure.

She had indeed loved her cousin with the deep silent love that passes words; but since she had become aware of the hopeless passion which had consumed his being, she had dedicated herself in thought to the service of heaven, and had gone so far as to impart to her confessor her intention of entering a convent upon the death of her uncle.—'When he requires my services no more,' she had added; and that that time was fast approaching, was evident to every eye but her own. She possessed a fortune of her own sufficient to make her a rich prize to any convent which she might choose to enter, and her Jesuit advisers would not be likely to oppose a course which would place Virginie de Saint-Cyrs in their hands, and at their disposal for ever.

The lawyer, staggered at the suddenness and strangeness of the proposition, was still true to the instincts of his profession, and was rapidly balancing the pro's and con's of the question in his ready brain. 'We must bear in mind, Mademoiselle,' he said at last, 'that your cousin would be bound by his vows to you, and without the holy purposes which you have in store, he may find a life of celibacy hard to bear.'

Virginie's colour changed under the sharp probe which these words brought to bear upon her highly-strung heart.

'It will be his share of the sacrifice,' she replied, with the dignity natural to her. 'It is the only way that I can save his inheritance to him; and if you reflect, sir, you will see,' she added, turning her face from the light, 'it is the only way in which I can offer it.'

Touched by the noble simplicity of her manner, the lawyer bent his head, and owned himself defeated in the poor defence which he had opposed to her proposition.

'Shall I seek Mr. Gilbert,' he said, 'and acquaint him with your noble determination?'

'If you please,' Virginie replied, with the self-possession that had never deserted her; but no sooner had the door closed upon his retreating form than the passionate emotions of her soul overmastered her, and flinging herself on her knees, she wept such tears as she had never wept before, while she murmured between the sobs that shook her light frame like a reed, 'Saved! saved! saved!'

On Christmas eve the mock ceremony, as it might be called, was solemnized in the presence of the dying baronet, and the will was destroyed by the bride herself, at her own urgent request.

'I will be true to you in one sense, Virginie,' said the bridegroom, as he kissed the pale brows of his self-sacrificed bride; 'for your sake I will forswear the society of your sex for ever.'

'For your own, Gilbert,' she replied, softly. 'You have had a bitter experience of our faith. Think of me ever as the bride of heaven.'

'You are too good for earth. You know nothing of the fiercer passions that tear our coarser natures like tiger talons. Virginie, you are too pure to know the strength of earthly love.'

It was a cruel blow to her who had loved him all her life; but he believed in what he said as in gospel truth; he believed that she had looked upon herself from her earliest youth as the affianced bride of heaven; he believed that the course she was pursuing was the one which offered to her all that life knows of the most beautiful, and happy, and complete.

And so, upon the baronet's death, they parted. He entered upon the possession of the de Rochfort title and estates, she went, under the escort of her confessor, to the protection of the abbess, her aunt. The marriage ceremony was conducted with such privacy that none but the lawyer and the priest were acquainted with the fact. The new Sir Gilbert de Rochfort was admired, and courted, and sought after, but, bleeding from a recent wound, he avoided the snares and the lures to which he would once have fallen an easy victim.

He had escaped hitherto any passing entanglement or pitfall; he had been true to his vow to Virginie, until the fatal evening when he first met Mrs. Stuart in the familiar home circle of a happy household. Then, as we have seen, he fell; and as retribution follows ever on the sins of unfaithfulness, he was doomed to hear from her lips of the fair nun bride, whose remembrance was fast passing out of his mind like a dream.

'I have a message for you from Virginie.' There was no talk after that of delay. The history he had to tell was evidently no secret to the woman he so passionately loved.

Sir Gilbert dropped the hand that had before lain tenderly within his own as though an adder had stung him. 'From Virginie,' he repeated,

mechanically; 'what do you know of her?'

'I know what were your parting words; she gave them to me as a watchword by which you might recognize the truth of the message which I have to give; they were, "I will be true to you, Virginie," and she bade me to tell her if you were true—true to her—true to yourself. What answer shall I take her back?'

'You are cruel,' said Sir Gilbert, as his countenance paled and his eyes shot the deep fire which is struck from strong natures roused. 'I was true to her

until I saw you, until I loved you, Mary; and now you—you of all others—dare to taunt me with my broken faith.'

'You love me then, Gilbert—you love me now—you love me at last; then my life's sacrifice has not been made in vain. You are true to Virginie—you are true to me. I am no widow—I am your wife—I am Virginie de Rochfort. See here my bridal ring, which you placed upon my finger when you loved me not. I am no nun. I have waited for you, and won you. *Gilbert de Rochfort, are you true to your wife?*'

## A PERILOUS JOURNEY.

### A Tale.

'There is a tide in the affairs of men,  
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune—'

SO says the sage, and it is not to be gainsayed by any man whom forty winters have chilled into wisdom. Ability and opportunity are fortune. Opportunity is not fortune; otherwise all were fortunate. Ability is not fortune, else why does genius slave? Why? But because it missed the opportunity that fitted it.

What I have—wife, position, independence—I owe to an opportunity for exercising the very simple and unpretending combination of qualities that goes by the name of ability. But to my story.

My father was a wealthy country gentleman, of somewhat more than the average of intelligence, and somewhat more than the average of generosity and extravagance. His younger brother, a solicitor in large practice in London, would in vain remonstrate as to the imprudence of his course. Giving freely, spending freely, must come to an end. It did; and at twenty I was a well-educated, gentlemanly pauper. The investigation of my father's affairs showed that there was one shilling and sixpence in the pound for the whole of his creditors, and of course nothing for me.

The position was painful. I was half engaged to—that is, I had gloves, flowers, a ringlet, a *carte de visite* of Alice Morton. That, of course, must be stopped.

Mr. Silas Morton was not ill-pleased at the prospect of an alliance with his neighbour Westwood's son while there was an expectation of a provision for

the young couple in the union of estates as well as persons; but now, when the estate was gone, when I, Guy Westwood, was shillingless in the world, it would be folly indeed. Nevertheless I must take my leave.

'Well, Guy, my lad, bad job this; very bad job; thought he was as safe as the Bank. Would not have believed it from any one—not from any one. Of course all that nonsense about you and Alice must be stopped now; I'm not a hard man, but I can't allow Alice to throw away her life in the poverty she would have to bear as your wife; can't do it; wouldn't be the part of a father if I did.'

I suggested I might in time.

'Time, sir! time! How much? She's nineteen now. You're brought up to nothing; know nothing that will earn you a sixpence for the next six months, and you talk about time. Time, indeed! Keep her waiting till she's thirty, and then break her heart by finding it a folly to marry at all.'

'Ah! Alice, my dear, Guy's come to say "Good bye," he sees, with me, that his altered position compels him, as an honourable man, to give up any hopes he may have formed as to the future.'

He left us alone to say 'Farewell!'—a word too hard to say at our ages. Of course we consulted what should be done. To give each other up, to bury the delicious past, that was not to be thought of. We would be constant, spite of all. I must gain a position, and papa would then help us.

Two ways were open: a commission

in India, a place in my uncle's office. Which? I was for the commission, Alice for the office. A respectable influential solicitor; a position not to be despised; nothing but cleverness wanted; and my uncle's name, and no one to wait for: no liver complaints; no Sepoys; no sea voyages; and no long separation.

'Oh, I'm sure it is the best thing.'

I agreed, not unnaturally then, that it was the best.

'Now, you young people, you've had time enough to say "Good-bye," so be off, Guy. Here, my lad, you'll need something to start with,' and the old gentleman put into my hands a note for fifty pounds.

'I must beg, sir, that you will not insult—'

'God bless the boy! "Insult?" Why I've danced you on my knee hundreds of times. Look you, Guy!—and the old fellow came and put his hand on my shoulder!—it gives me pain to do what I am doing. I believe, for both your sakes, it is best you should part. Let us part friends. Come now, Guy, you'll need this; and if you need a little more, let me know.'

'But, sir, you cut me off from all hope; you render my life a burden to me. Give me some definite task; say how much you think we ought to have; I mean, how much I ought to have to keep Alice—I mean, Miss Morton—in such a position as you would wish.'

Alice added her entreaties, and the result of the conference was an understanding that if within five years from that date I could show I was worth 500*l.* a year, the old gentleman would add another 500*l.*; and on that he thought we might live for a few years comfortably.

There was to be no correspondence whatever; no meetings, no messages. We protested and pleaded, and finally he said—

'Well, well, Guy; I always liked you, and liked your father before you. Come to us on Christmas Day, and you shall find a vacant chair beside Alice. There, now; say "Good-bye," and be off.'

I went off. I came to London, to one of the little lanes leading out of Cannon Street. Five hundred a year in five years! I must work hard.

My uncle took little notice of me; I fancied worked me harder than the rest, and paid me the same. Seventy-five pounds a year is not a large sum. I had spent it in a month before now, after the fashion of my father: now, I hoarded; made clothes last: ate in musty, cheap, little cookshops; and kept my enjoying

facilities from absolute rust by a weekly half-price to the theatres—the pit.

The year passed. I went down at Christmas, and for twenty-four hours was alive; came back, and had a rise of twenty pounds in salary for the next year. I waited for opportunity, and it came not.

This jog-trot routine of office-work continued for two years more, and at the end of that time I was worth but my salary of 135*l.* per year—135*l.*! a long way from 500*l.* Oh, for opportunity! I must quit the desk, and become a merchant; all successful men have been merchants; money begets money. But to oppose all these thoughts of change came the memory of Alice's last words at Christmas: 'Wait and hope, Guy, dear; wait and hope.' Certainly; it's so easy to.

'Governor wants you, Westwood. He's sharp this morning; very sharp; so look out, my dear nephew.'

'You understand a little Italian, I think?' said my uncle.

'A little, sir.'

'You will start to-night for Florence, in the mail train. Get there as rapidly as possible, and find whether a Colonel Wilson is residing there, and what lady he is residing with. Learn all you can as to his position and means, and the terms on which he lives with that lady. Write to me, and wait there for further instructions. Mr. Williams will give you a cheque for 100*l.*; you can get circular notes for 50*l.*, and the rest cash. If you have anything to say, come in here at five o'clock; if not, good-morning. By-the-by, say nothing in the office.'

I need not say that hope made me believe my opportunity was come.

I hurried to Florence, and discharged my mission; sent home a careful letter, full of facts without comment or opinion, and in three weeks' time was summoned to return. I had done little or nothing that could help me, and in a disappointed state of mind I packed up and went to the railway station at St. Dominico. A little row with a peasant as to his demand for carrying my baggage caused me to lose the last train that night, and so the steamer at Leghorn. The station-master, seeing my vexation, endeavoured to console me.

'There will be a special through train to Leghorn at nine o'clock, ordered for Count Spezzato: he is good-natured, and will possibly let you go in that.'

It was worth the chance, and I hung about the station till I was tired, and then walked back towards the village.

Passing a small wine-shop, I entered, and asked for wine in English. I don't know what whim possessed me when I did it, for they were unable to understand me without dumb motions. I at length got wine by these means, and sat down to while away the time over a railway volume.

I had been seated about half an hour, when a courier entered, accompanied by a railway guard. Two more different examples of the human race it would be difficult to describe.

The guard was a dark, savage-looking Italian, with 'rascal' and 'bully' written all over him; big, black, burly, with bloodshot eyes, and thick, heavy, sensual lips, the man was utterly repulsive.

The courier was a little, neatly-dressed man, of no age in particular; pale, blue-eyed, straight-lipped, his face was a compound of fox and rabbit that only a fool or a patriot would have trusted out of arm's length.

This ill-matched pair called for brandy, and the hostess set it before them. I then heard them ask who and what I was. She replied, I must be an Englishman, and did not understand the Italian for wine. She then left.

They evidently wanted to be alone, and my presence was decidedly disagreeable to them; and muttering that I was an Englishman, they proceeded to try my powers as a linguist.

The courier commenced in Italian, with a remark on the weather. I immediately handed him the newspaper. I did not speak Italian, that was clear to them.

The guard now struck in with a remark in French as to the fineness of the neighbouring country. I shrugged my shoulders, and produced my cigar-case. French was not very familiar to me, evidently.

'Those beasts of English think their own tongue so fine they are too proud to learn another,' said the guard.

I sat quietly sipping my wine, and reading.

'Well, my dear Michael Pultuaki,' began the guard.

'For the love of God, call me not by that name. My name is Alexis—Alexis Dzentsol, now.'

'Oh! oh!' laughed the guard; 'you've changed your name, you fox; it's like you. Now I am the same that you knew fifteen years ago, Conrad Ferrate—to-day, yesterday, and for life, Conrad Ferrate. Come, lad, tell us your story. How did you get out of that little affair at Warsaw? How they could have trusted you, with your face,

with their secrets, I can't for the life of me tell; you look so like a sly knave, don't you, lad?'

The courier, so far from resenting this familiarity, smiled, as if he had been praised.

'My story is soon said. I found, after my betrayal to the police of the secrets of that little conspiracy which you and I joined, that Poland was too hot for me, and my name too well known. I went to France, who values her police, and for a few years was useful to them. But it was dull work; very dull; native talent was more esteemed. I was to be sent on a secret service to Warsaw; I declined, for obvious reasons.'

'Good! Michael—Alexis: good, Alexis. This fox is not to be trapped.' And he slapped the courier on the shoulder heartily.

'And,' resumed the other, 'I resigned. Since then I have travelled as courier with noble families, and I trust I give satisfaction.'

'Good! Alexis; good, Mich—good, Alexis! To yourself you give satisfaction. You are a fine rascal!—the prince of rascals! So decent; so quiet; so like the curé of a convent. Who would believe that you had sold the lives of thirty men for a few hundred roubles?'

'And who,' interrupted the courier, 'would believe that you, bluff, honest Conrad Ferrate, had run away with all the money those thirty men had collected during ten years of labour, for rescuing their country from the Russian?'

'That was good, Alexis, was it not? I never was so rich in my life as then; I loved—I gamed—I drank—on the patriots' money.'

'For how long? Three years?'

'More—and now have none left. Ah!—Times change, Alexis; behold me.' And the guard touched his buttons and belt, the badges of his office. 'Never mind—here's my good friend the bottle—let us embrace—the only friend that is always true—if he does not gladden, he makes us to forget.'

'Tell me, my good Alexis, whom do you rob now? Who pays for the best, and gets the second best? Whose money do you invest, eh! my little fox? Why are you here? Come, tell me while I drink to your success.'

'I have the honour to serve His Excellency the Count Spozzato.'

'Ten thousand devils! My accursed cousin!' broke in the guard. 'He who has robbed me from his birth; whose birth itself was a vile robbery of me—of



me, his cousin, child of his father's brother. May he be accursed for ever!

I took most particular pains to appear only amused at this genuine outburst of passion, for I saw the watchful eye of the courier was on me all the time they were talking.

The guard drank off a tumbler of brandy.

'That master of yours is the man of whom I spoke to you years ago, as the one who had ruined me; and you serve him! May he be strangled on his wedding night, and cursed for ever!'

'Be calm, my dearest Conrad, calm yourself; that beast of an Englishman will think you are drunk, like one of his own swinish people, if you talk so loud as this.'

'How can I help it? I must talk. What he is, that I ought to be; I was brought up to it till I was eighteen; was the heir to all his vast estate: there was but one life between me and power—my uncle's—and he, at fifty, married a girl, and had this son, this son of perdition, my cousin. And after that, I, who had been the pride of my family, became of no account; it was "Julian," "sweet Julian!"'

'I heard,' said the courier, 'that some one attempted to strangle the sweet child, that was——?'

'Me—you fox—me. I wish I had done it; but for that wretched dog that worried me, I should have been Count Spezzato now. I killed that dog, killed him, no not suddenly; may his master die like him!'

'And you left after that little affair?'

'Oh yes! I left and became what you know me.'

'A clever man, my dear Conrad. I know no man who is more clever with the ace than yourself, and, as to bullying to cover a mistake, you are an emperor at that. Is it not so, Conrad? Come, drink good health to my master, your cousin.'

'You miserable viper, I'll crush you if you ask me to do that again. I'll drink—Here, give me the glass—'

'Here's to Count Spezzato: May he die like a dog! May his carcass bring the birds and the wolves together! May his name be cursed and hated while the sun lasts! And may purgatory keep him till I pray for his release!'

The man's passion was something frightful to see, and I was more than half inclined to leave the place; but something, perhaps a distant murmur of the rising tide, compelled me to stay. I pretended sleep, allowing my head to sink down upon the table.

He sat still for a few moments and

then commenced walking about the room, and abruptly asked;

'What brought you here, Alexis?'

'My master's horse, Signor Conrad.'

'Good, my little fox; but why did you come on your master's horse?'

'Because my master wishes to reach Leghorn to-night, to meet his bride, Conrad.'

'Then his is the special train ordered at nine, that I am to go with?' exclaimed the guard eagerly.

'That is so, gentle Conrad; and now, having told you all, let me pay our hostess and go.'

'Pay! No one pays for me, little fox; no, no, go; I will pay.'

The courier took his departure and the guard kept walking up and down the room, muttering to himself:

'To-night, it might be to-night. If he goes to Leghorn, he meets his future wife; another life, and perhaps a dozen. No, it must be to-night or never. Does his mother go? Fool that I am not to ask! Yes; it shall be to-night;' and he left the room.

What should be 'to-night?' Some foul play of which the Count would be the victim, no doubt. But how? when? That must be solved. To follow him, or to wait—which? To wait. It is always best to wait; I had learned this lesson already.

I waited. It was now rather more than half-past eight, and I had risen to go to the door when I saw the guard returning to the wine-shop with a man whose dress indicated the stoker.

'Come in, Guido; come in,' said the guard; 'and drink with me.'

The man came in, and I was again absorbed in my book.

They seated themselves at the same table as before, and drank silently for a while; presently the guard began a conversation in some patois I could not understand; but I could see the stoker grow more and more interested as the name of Beatrix occurred more frequently.

As the talk went on, the stoker seemed pressing the guard on some part of the story with a most vindictive eagerness, repeatedly asking, 'His name? The accused! His name?'

At last the guard answered, 'The Count Spezzato.'

'The Count Spezzato!' said the stoker, now leaving the table, and speaking in Italian.

'Yes, good Guido; the man who will travel in the train we take to-night to Leghorn.'

'He shall die! The accused! He shall die to-night!' said the stoker. 'If

I lose my life, the betrayer of my sister shall die!

The guard, returning to the unknown tongue, seemed to be endeavouring to calm him; and I could only catch a repetition of the word 'Empoli' at intervals. Presently the stoker took from the seats beside him two tin bottles, such as you may see in the hands of mechanics who dine out; and I could see that one of them had rudely scratched on it the name 'William Atkinson.' I fancied the guard produced from his pocket a phial, and poured the contents into that bottle; but the action was so rapid, and the corner so dark, that I could not be positive; then rising, they stopped at the counter, had both bottles filled with brandy, and went out.

It was now time to get to the station; and, having paid my modest score, I went out.

A little in front of me, by the light from a small window, I saw these two cross themselves, grip each other's hands across right to right, left to left, and part.

The stoker had set down the bottles, and now taking them up followed the guard at a slower pace.

Arrived at the station, I found the Count, his mother, a female servant, and the courier.

The Count came up to me, and said, in broken English, 'You are the English to go to Leghorn with me? Very well, there is room. I like the English. You shall pay nothing, because I do not sell tickets; you shall go free. Is that so?'

I thanked him in the best Italian I could muster.

'Do not speak your Italian to me; I speak the English as a native; I can know all you shall say to me in your own tongue. See, here is the train special, as you call it. Enter, as it shall please you.'

The train drew up to the platform; and I saw that the stoker was at his post, and that the engine-driver was an Englishman.

I endeavoured in vain to draw his attention to warn him, and was compelled to take my seat, which I did in the compartment next the guard's break—the train consisting of only that carriage and another, in which were the Count, his mother, and the servant.

The guard passed along the train, looked the doors, and entered his box.

'The Florence goods is behind you, and the Siena goods is due at Empoli Junction four minutes before you; mind you don't run into it,' said the station-master, with a laugh.

'No fear; we shall not run into it,' said the guard, with a marked emphasis on the 'we' and 'it' that I recalled afterwards.

The whistle sounded, and we were off. It was a drizzling dark night; and lay down full length on the seat to sleep.

As I lay down a gleam of light shot across the carriage from a small chink in the wood-work of the partition between the compartment I was in and the guard's box.

I was terribly anxious from the manner of the guard; and this seemed to be a means of hearing something more. I lay down and listened attentively.

'How much will you give for your life, my little fox?' said the guard.

'To-day, very little; when I am sixty, all I have, Conrad.'

'But you might give something for it, to-night, sweet Alexis, if you knew it was in danger?'

'I have no fear; Conrad Ferrati has too often conducted a train for me to fear to-night.'

'True, my good Alexis; but this is the last train he will ride with as guard, for to-morrow he will be the Count Spezzato.'

'How? To-morrow? You joke, Conrad. The brandy was strong; but you who have drunk so much could hardly feel that.'

'I neither joke, nor am I drunk; yet I shall be Count Spezzato to-morrow, good Alexis. Look you, my gentle fox, my sweet fox; if you do not buy your life of me you shall die to-night. That is simple, sweet fox.'

'Ay; but, Conrad, I am not in danger.'

'Nay, Alexis; see, here is the door' (I heard him turn the handle). 'If you lean against the door, you will fall out and be killed. Is it not simple?'

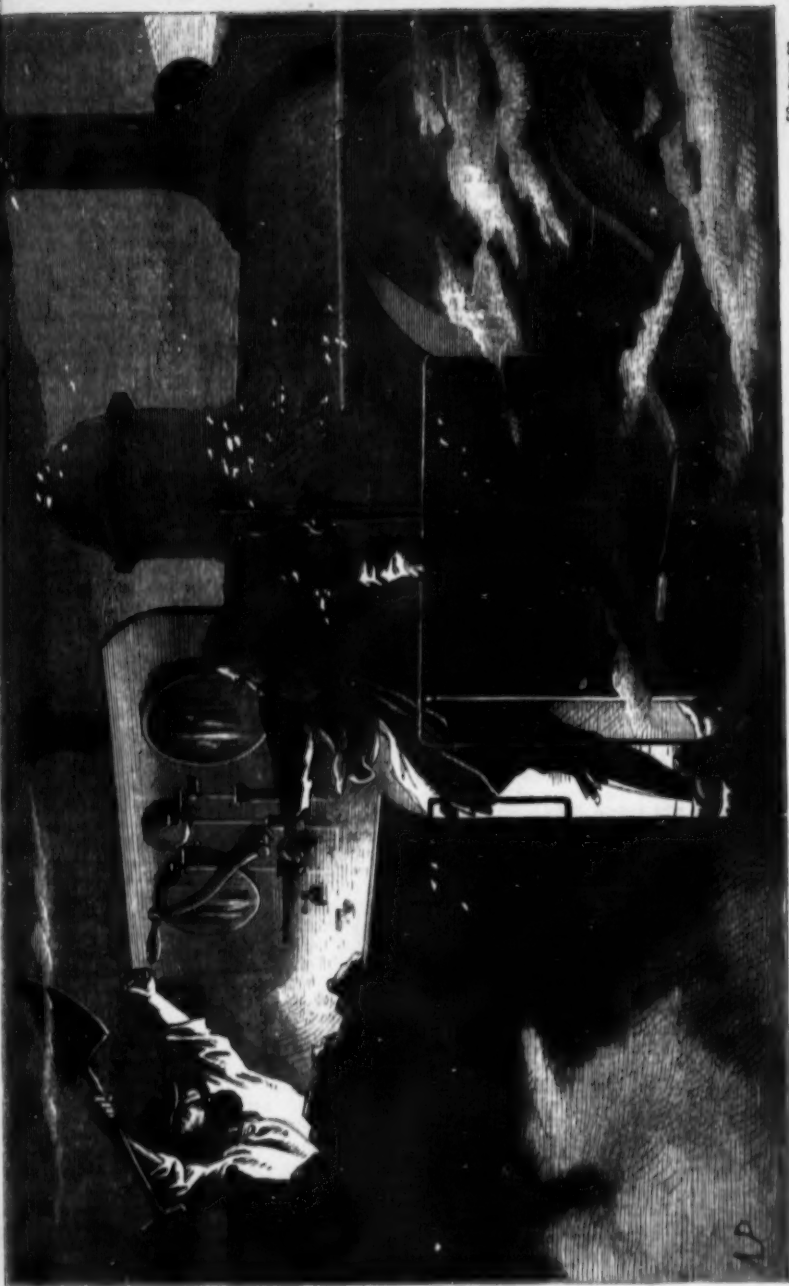
'But, good Conrad, I shall not lean against the door.'

'Oh, my sweet fox, my cunning fox, my timid fox, but not my strong fox; you will lean against the door. I know you will, unless I prevent you; and I will not prevent you, unless you give me all you have in that bag.'

The mocking tone of the guard seemed well understood, for I heard the click of gold.

'Good, my Alexis; it is good; but it is very little for a life. Come, what is your life worth, that you buy it with only your master's money? it has cost you nothing. I see you will lean against that door, which is so foolish.'

'What, in the name of all the devils



Drawn by J. A. Poupier.

A PERILOUS JOURNEY.

(See page 63.)

in hell will you have?' said the trembling voice of the courier.

'Only a little more; just that belt that is under your shirt, under everything, next to your skin, and dearer to you; a little soft leather belt with pouches in. Is not life worth a leather belt?'

'Wretch! All the earnings of my life are in that belt, and you know it.'

'Is it possible, sweet fox, that I have found your nest? I shall give Mario a necklace of diamonds, then. Why do you wait? Why should you fall from a train, and make a piece of news for the papers? Why?'

'Take it; and be accursed in your life and death!' and I heard the belt flung on the floor of the carriage.

'Now, good Alexis, I am in funds; there are three pieces of gold for you; you will need them at Leghorn. Will you drink? No? Then I will tell you why, without drink. Do you know where we are?'

'Yes; between St. Dominico and Signa.'

'And do you know where we are going?'

'Yes; to Leghorn.'

'No, sweet Alexis, we are not; we are going to Empoli; the train will go no further. Look you, little fox; we shall arrive at the junction one minute before the Sienna goods train, and there the engine will break down just where the rails cross; for two blows of a hammer will convert an engine into a log; I shall get out to examine it; that will take a little time; I shall explain to the Count the nature of the injury; that will take a little time; and then the goods train will have arrived; and as it does not stop there, this train will go no further than Empoli, and I shall be Count Spezzato to-morrow. How do you like my scheme, little fox? Is it not worthy of your pupil? Oh, it will be a beautiful accident; it will fill the papers. That beast of an English who begged his place in the train will be fortunate; he will cease, for goods trains are heavy. Eh! but it's a grand scheme—the son, the mother, the servant, the stranger, the engine-driver, all shall tell no tales.'

'And the stoker?' said the courier.

'Oh, you and he and I shall escape. We shall be pointed at in the street as the fortunate. It is good, is it not, Alexis, my fox? I have told him that the Count is the man who betrayed his sister. He believes it, and is my creature. But, little fox, it was not my cousin, it was myself, that took his Beatrix from her home. Is it not good,

Alexis? Is it not genius? And Atkinson—he, the driver—is now stupid: he has drunk from his can the poppy juice that will make him sleep for ever. I will be a politician. I am worthy of office. I will become the Minister of a Bourbon when I am Count, my dear fox, and you shall be my comrade again, as of old.'

I was, for a time, lost to every sensation save that of hearing. The fiendish garrulity of the man had all the fascination of the serpent's rattle. I felt helplessly resigned to a certain fate.

I was aroused by something white slowly passing the closed window of the carriage. I waited a little, then gently opened it and looked out. The stoker was crawling along the foot-board of the next carriage, holding on by its handles, so as not to be seen by the occupants, and holding the signal lantern that I had noticed at the back of the last carriage in his hand. The meaning of it struck me in a moment: if, by any chance, we missed the goods train from Sienna, we should be run into from behind by the train from Florence.

The cold air that blew in at the open window refreshed me, and I could think what was to be done. The train was increasing its pace rapidly. Evidently the stoker, in sole charge, was striving to reach Empoli before the other train, which we should follow, was due: he had to make five minutes in a journey of forty-five, and, at the rate we were going, we should do it. We stopped nowhere, and the journey was more than half over. We were now between Segna and Montelupo; another twenty minutes and I should be a bruised corpse. Something must be done.

I decided soon. Unfastening my bag, I took out my revolver, without which I never travel, and looking carefully to the loading and capping, fastened it to my waist with a handkerchief. I then cut with my knife the bar across the middle of the window, and carefully looked out. I could see nothing; the rain was falling fast, and the night as dark as ever. I cautiously put out first one leg and then the other, keeping my knees and toes close to the door, and lowered myself till I felt the step. I walked carefully along the foot-board by side steps, holding on to the handles of the doors, till I came to the end of the carriages, and was next the tender. Here was a gulf that seemed impassable. The stoker must have passed over it; why not I? Mounting from the foot-board on to the buffer, and holding on

to the iron hook on which the lamps are hung, I stretched my legs to reach the flat part of the buffer on the tender. My legs swung about with the vibration, and touched nothing. I must spring. I had to hold with both hands behind my back, and stood on the case of the buffer-spring, and, suddenly leaving go, leaped forward, struck violently against the edge of the tender, and grasped some of the loose lumps of coal on the top. Another struggle brought me on my knees, bruised and bleeding on the top. I stood up, and at that moment the stoker opened the door of the furnace, and turned towards me, shovel in hand, to put in the coals. The bright red light from the fire enabled him to see me, while it blinded me. He rushed at me, and then began a struggle that I shall remember to my dying day. He grasped me round the throat with one arm, dragging me close to his breast, and with the other kept shortening the shovel for an effective blow. My hands, numbed and bruised, were almost useless to me, and for some seconds we reeled to and fro on the foot-plate in the blinding glare. At last he got me against the front of the engine, and, with horrible ingenuity, pressed me against it till the lower part of my clothes were burnt to a cinder. The heat, however, restored my hands, and at last I managed to push him far enough from my body to loosen my pistol. I did not want to kill him, but I could not be very careful, and I fired at his shoulder from the back. He dropped the shovel, the arm that had nearly throttled me relaxed, and he fell. I pushed him into a corner of the tender, and sat down to recover myself.

My object was to get to Empoli before the Sienna goods train, for I knew nothing of what might be behind me. It was too late to stop, but I might, by shortening the journey seven minutes instead of five, get to Empoli three minutes before the goods train was due.

I had never been on an engine before in my life, but I knew that there must be a valve somewhere that let the steam from the boiler into the cylinders, and that, being important, it would be in a conspicuous position. I therefore turned the large handle in front of me, and had the satisfaction of finding the speed rapidly increased, and at the same time felt the guard putting on the break to retard the train. Spite of this, in ten minutes I could see some dim lights; I could not tell where, and I still pressed on, faster and faster.

In vain, between the intervals of put-

ting on coals, did I try to arouse the sleeping driver. There I was, with two apparently dead bodies on the foot-plate of an engine, going at the rate of forty miles an hour, or more, amidst a thundering noise and vibration that nearly maddened me.

At last we reached the lights, and I saw, as I dashed by, that we had passed the dread point.

As I turned back, I could see the rapidly-dropping cinders from the train which, had the guard's break been sufficiently powerful to have made me thirty seconds later, would have utterly destroyed me.

I was still in a difficult position. There was the train half a minute behind us, which, had we kept our time, would have been four minutes in front of us. It came on to the same rails, and I could hear its dull rumble rushing on towards us, fast. If I stopped there was no light to warn them. I must go on, for the Sienna train did not stop at Empoli.

I put on more fuel, and after some slight scalding, from turning on the wrong taps, had the pleasure of seeing the water-gauge filling up. Still I could not go on long; the risk was awful. I tried in vain to write on a leaf of my note-book, and after searching in the tool-box, wrote on the iron lid of the tank with a piece of chalk, 'Stop everything behind me. The train will not be stopped till three red lights are ranged in a line on the ground. Telegraph forwards.' And then, as we flew through the Empoli Station, I threw it on the platform. On we went; the same dull thunder behind warning me that I dare not stop.

We passed through another station at full speed, and at length I saw the white lights of another station in the distance. The sound behind had almost ceased, and in a few moments more I saw the line of three red lamps low down on the ground. I pulled back the handle, and after an ineffectual effort to pull up at the station, brought up the train about a hundred yards beyond Pontedera.

The porters and police of the station came up and put the train back, and then came the explanation.

The guard had been found dead on the rails, just beyond Empoli, and the telegraph set to work to stop the train. He must have found out the failure of his scheme, and in trying to reach the engine, have fallen on the rails.

The driver was only stupefied, and the stoker fortunately only dangerously, not fatally, wounded.

Another driver was found, and the train was to go on.

The Count had listened most attentively to my statements, and then, taking my grimed hand in his, led me to his mother.

'Madam, my mother, you have from this day one other son: this, my mother, is my brother.'

The Countess literally fell on my neck, and kissed me in the sight of them all; and speaking in Italian, said,—

'Julian, he is my son; he has saved my life; and more, he has saved your life. My son, I will not say much; what is your name?'

'Guy Westwood.'

'Guy, my child, my son, I am your mother; you shall love me.'

'Yea, my mother; he is my brother. I am his. He is English, too; I like English. He has done well. Blanche shall be his sister.'

During the whole of this time both mother and son were embracing me and kissing my cheeks, after the impulsive manner of their passionate natures, the indulgence of which appears so strange to our cold blood.

The train was delayed, for my wounds and bruises to be dressed, and I then entered their carriage and went to Leghorn with them.

Arrived there, I was about to say 'Farewell.'

'What is farewell, now? No; you must see Blanche, your sister. You will sleep to my hotel: I shall not let you go. Who is she that in your great book says, "Where you go, I will go?" That is my spirit. You must not leave me till—till you are as happy as I am.'

He kept me, introduced me to Blanche, and persuaded me to write for leave to stay another two months, when he would return to England with me. Little by little he made me talk about Alice, till he knew all my story.

'Ah! that is it; you shall be unhappy because you want 500*l.* every year, and I have so much as that. I am a patriot to get rid of my money. So it is that you will not take money. You have saved my life, and you will not take money; but I shall make you take money, my friend, English Guy: you shall have as thus.' And he handed me my appointment as secretary to one of the largest railways in Italy. 'Now you shall take money; now you will not go to your fogland to work like a slave; you shall take the money. That is not all. I am one of the practice patriots—no, the practical patriots—of Italy. They come to me with their conspiracies to join, their secret societies to adhere to, but I do not. I am director of ever so many railways; I make fresh directions every day. I say to those who talk to me of politics, "How many shares will you take in this or in that?" I am printer of books; I am builder of museums; I have great share in docks, and I say to these, "It is this that I am doing that is wanted." This is not conspiracy; it is not plot; it is not society with ribbons; but it is what Italy, my country, wants. I grow poor; Italy grows rich. I am not wise in these things; they cheat me, because I am enthusiast. Now, Guy, my brother, you are wise; you are deep; long in the head; in short, you are English! You shall be my guardian in these things—you shall save me from the cheat, and you shall work hard as you like for all the money you shall take of me. Come, my Guy, is it so?'

Need I say that it was so? The Count and his Blanche made their honeymoon tour in England. They spent Christmas Day with Alice and myself at Mr. Morton's, and when they left, Alice and I left with them, for our new home in Florence.





## COUSIN TOM.



COUSIN TOM had come home from India after an absence of twenty years, and had written to me from Southampton immediately after his arrival, saying that he would be with me on Christmas Eve. Though only a far-away cousin, I had been kind to him in former days; had thrashed him with great judgment when we were boys together, he being two or three years my junior; had borrowed his money when he had more than was good for him; and had altogether behaved to him as an elder brother. Up to the time of his going to India we had been very intimate, and we had corresponded occasionally since. And besides this, he bore the same family name as myself, and I believe that I was, in reality, about the nearest relative that he had in the world. So of course it was quite natural that he should come to me; and I, on my part, looked forward to the meeting with the greatest possible pleasure.

And what a glorious thing it must be, I thought, after being in India twenty years, to arrive at a friend's house in England on Christmas Eve! What a renovation of youth to come from that land of lassitude, and punkahs, and yellow women, to the bracing frosty air of such a Christmas as that was, and the society of fresh and blooming English girls! There was my own dear little daughter Rose; now, what a treat it must be for a man coming from India only to look upon her! And my sister Rebecca, too, who had lived with us since my poor wife died—why, the sight of her clear complexion and bright blue eyes must be a pleasure worth coming for all the way from Calcutta! Then I had commissioned Rose to invite several nice girls for the Christmas week, and my young friend Brooks, and several other bachelors, young and old, were coming also; and I had made up my mind to have snapdragons, and forfeits,

and blind-man's buff, and Sir Roger de Coverley; and I had got an immense branch of mistletoe hanging up in the hall, while sprigs of the same delightful plant pervaded every part of the house, so that in no corner of it was kissing impracticable. Why positively, I thought, Tom can't have seen a bit of mistletoe since he was one-and-twenty, for of course they get none in India, or if they do, it must be of a very outlandish sort, that's all I know. Fancy, Indian mistletoe! who could kiss under that? And we had regular Christmas weather, and the ice bore beautifully. What a fine thing it would be for Tom to put on the skates again! or if he had forgotten the way to skate, why he could enjoy a jolly old English slide, and that was even better. And then, above all, Tom should go to the pantomime on Boxing night, for 'twas within an easy distance of London. Think of the glories of a pantomime after twenty years in India! Now I never was out of England (except once to Boulogne), much less out of Europe; but I should suppose that nobody ever attempted to get up a pantomime in Calcutta. Fancy the absurdity of clown and pantaloon knocking about policemen and jumping through shop windows with the thermometer at a thousand—or whatever it may rise to in that part of the world! I rubbed my hands in ecstacy at the thought of the fun we should have in watching Tom on Boxing night, and especially as I looked forward to his wonder at the transformation scene! Why he would be better than a whole boxful of children, with the additional advantage that he would be good for a kidney and a cigar at Evans's after coming out of the theatre. My sister Rebecca rather demurred to this last consideration, but smiled and gave in as soon as she saw that I was bent upon it. She was as good a soul as ever lived; and if she did find fault when I didn't scrape my boots sufficiently, and when I smoked a cigar in the dining-room, I know very well that it was all from kindness to me and in the interests of my curtains and carpets. Yes, she was and is a very good soul; and never did her goodness show itself more than when we were looking forward to the arrival of Cousin Tom. Rose shared more largely the exuberance of my delight, but Rebecca was always quiet in her manner, and never made a fuss about anything. She was pleased at the thought of Tom's coming, though,

I could see that; and it was wonderful what a deal of care and trouble she took to adorn his room, and to air his sheets, and to make a thousand arrangements for his comfort, which Rose, as a mere girl of eighteen, and I, as the mere head of the household, could scarcely be expected to understand. Why, positively, among other things, she spent hours over a cookery book learning the way to make curries and other Indian kickshaws, until I got out of all patience, and told her in a most tyrannical and arbitrary manner—for which I felt it necessary afterwards to beg her pardon—that I would have no such outlandish dishes as these in my house at Christmas time, and that if Cousin Tom couldn't eat good old English fare of roast beef, roast goose, or roast turkey, and plum pudding, he was a greater ass than I took him to be, and might go back to India again as fast as he liked. She seemed also to have serious thoughts about turning me out of my own bedroom, and only desisted because, on consideration, she fancied that one of the others was more warm and comfortable! Really it was astonishing that my sister Rebecca should have thought so much of Cousin Tom's coming, for one would have supposed that she could scarcely have remembered him, she having been but a slip of a girl of Rose's age when Tom went away twenty years before, and never having seen so much of him as I had. But so it was; and I really think that, in her quiet way, she looked forward to seeing Cousin Tom with as much pleasure as I did myself.

And so Christmas Eve came, and regular hearty, jolly Christmas weather it was—such as we don't often get now—a thorough hard frost upon the ground, ice four inches thick upon the ponds, every ewer and water-bottle frozen over, blankets in incredible numbers on every bed in the house, and everybody—or, at all events, I myself possessed of a wonderful appetite, and an unlimited capacity for hot punch and toddy.

'I say, Rebecca,' I cried, giving my sister a rather harder slap on the back than I had intended—'I say, Rebecca, isn't this jolly? What a treat for Tom after India, eh? Light up the candles: draw the curtains; heap up the wood on the fire; have dinner on the table at six precisely. I'm going to run over to the station to meet Tom. Rose, my dear, my great coat. John!—where's John? Tell John to take over the cart for Tom's luggage. Tom will prefer walking, of course. Who wants to ride in this weather? Rose, I hope you won't

forget to send your invitations for New-Year's Eve. I say isn't it cold? And I think we are going to have some snow. Something like Christmas weather this, my dear! fine for Tom—fine indeed!'

And away I went to the station. In my impatience I was there half an hour before the train was due; but I didn't mind this, for I went into the station hotel and had a glass of old ale, and enjoyed myself very much indeed in reading the names of the people who had taken chances for the geese that were to be raffled; and looking over the old play-bills that had found their way down to our station hotel; and studying the time table, so as to be able to trace in imagination Tom's train as it sped along the rails, and to picture to myself the bit of English land he was looking out upon at that moment; and in admiring the tasteful manner in which the bar had been decorated with evergreens; and in having another glass of old ale; and in chatting with the pretty barmaid, who looked more pretty and rosy than ever in this hearty weather. And so at last the train was due, but of course it was late, for guards and drivers never try nor wish to keep their time on Christmas Eve, even when they have the power. Indeed, who, at such a time, would wish for trains, more than anything else, to go in their regular every-day business-like manner? And if they were so ill-advised as to do so, who would feel any pleasure in hanging about the stations just to see them come in? And who would be able to speak with a thrill of delight, not unmixed with awe, of the express not being in yet—'forty-seven minutes after its time, sir!'—but whose imagination would be impressed at the thought of the multitudes of people who were coming home to see their friends after having been away for ever so long; and of the forests of mistletoe in the trains; and of the immense quantities of hares, and turkeys, and Stilton cheeses, and all the rest of the Christmas presents, whose aggregate weight must be so enormous! Yes, it was quite right that the trains should be late; and so I read the play-bills again, and studied the time-table (which was intended for other days only) once more; and chatted with the barmaid again; and stood a glass of brandy and water to the old pot-boy; and had—yes, I positively had another glass of old ale myself! And so the time passed until at last the train rushed into the station, and I rushed on to the platform.

How shall I, after describing so fully

my hopes and anticipations, relate the miserably disappointing sequel?

Tom didn't come by that train, and what's more, he didn't come for the evening, nor for the whole Christmas; and before we saw his face all the nice girls whom Rose had invited had gone away from us again, and young Brooks and all my other friends had departed; and there was an end to the snap-dragons and Sir Roger; and the mistletoe had faded and was taken down, and the gloss of novelty was off the pantomimes, and the hearty Christmas weather had passed away and left in its place a miserable sickening drizzle, and fogs fit only for a London November. It certainly was horribly provoking.

And this was the way of it:—

On the day after Christmas Day I received a letter from Tom with the Southampton post-mark, and the additional mark, 'Too late.' This was the letter, which was not in his own handwriting:—

'Southampton, Dec. 24th.

'DEAR BOB,

'Thanks to this vile climate of yours, I am quite unable to keep my appointment for this evening. Being fatigued by my voyage, I did not get up very early this morning, but should, I think, have caught the train had I not met with an accident. In my haste to jump into the cab my foot slipped on a rascally slide that some young criminals had made in the street, and down I went, knocking off about a square yard of skin from my shin-bone. I had myself put to bed at once, and don't intend to stir out again until this abominably cold weather has passed away. Of course I regret not meeting you as soon as I expected; but, except for this, I am not sorry for the accident, as it gives me an excuse for remaining in bed until this unendurable frost has left us. Even if I had come to you, with or without the skin of my shin, I must have gone to bed instantly, and remained there, as I now intend doing. Now don't come to me, as you value my affection, for I wouldn't put the tips of my fingers outside the clothes to shake hands with the dearest friend I have in the world—and that's yourself. I dictate this letter to a highly-intelligent waiter, who is so obliging as to use the pen for me.

'With best respects to your daughter, whom I have never seen, and to your sister, whom I fancy that I must have met before I left England, I am,

Your affectionate cousin,

'THOMAS WAKE.'

And so, because Tom had got up too late, he had not allowed sufficient time to catch the train; and so, in his over-haste, he had slipped and fallen; and so, when he came to us Christmas had passed, and all the nice girls whom he ought to have known had gone away! The ingenious reader may perhaps surmise, from this last hint of mine, that I had a fancy of my own as to what were Tom's motives in coming to England. But more of this anon.

Altogether it was so much like Tom.

While I was thinking the matter over, a story which I had in former days heard about Cousin Tom's first appearance in the world came to my recollection. I must relate it here, as it will show why I said that it was 'so much like Tom' to be too late.

At the time when Mrs. Jonathan Wake was hourly expecting her first-born, who afterwards turned out to be Tom—some years, by the way, after her marriage—a rich old aunt of Jonathan's happened to be paying them a short visit, which she had herself volunteered. They would probably have put off anybody else at such a time; but the old lady was rich, and Jonathan was poor. That she should choose such an occasion for her visit seemed to betoken something good for the future, and she was received with even greater satisfaction than she would have been at any other time. Jonathan, as I have said, was poor. He had been rich once; but he had thrown away all his money by bad farming and keeping hounds; and the little fortune that he had got with his wife wouldn't go very far with him. He was a thick-set man, very broad across the shoulders; and partly for this reason, and partly on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle, because he was by no means too bright, he generally got among his friends the title of 'Wide Awake.' The best that can be said of him is, that he was a good-natured fellow and a bold rider.

Now the old aunt was a queer old lady, impulsive and capricious. She had never been married herself, and was generally very sarcastic about the marriages of her friends. She had formerly been kind to Jonathan by fits and starts, especially when, as a young man, he had been guilty of any particularly wild and foolish freak; but ever since he had married a very eligible young lady, and had thereupon become tolerably settled and steady, she had thrown him over altogether. This visit of hers was therefore quite an unlooked-for favour; especially as she

told Jonathan that she had come expressly in order to be in the house when the baby was born.

But the more the baby was expected, the more it didn't come; and the old lady began to wax impatient. Every day she got letters from other old ladies, friends of hers, pressing her to come and pay her promised visits to them, and giving accounts of delightful little parties where were to be obtained lots of nice bits of scandal, and miraculous winnings at whist. These were great temptations to her, for she was a very worldly old lady, and the dull quiet of Wide Awake's house didn't suit her at all.

At length she lost all patience. She had just finished reading a letter from old Lady Towzer, which contained some especially choice bits of scandal about the guests in her house, when Jonathan came in, wearing his old velvet coat, and the boots and gaiters in which he had been trudging around the farm; and, flinging himself into an easy chair, stretched out his legs and arms to their full extent, and yawned several times in succession, as only 'Wide Awake' could yawn.

The old lady could stand it no longer.

'Now Jonathan!' she said, sharply, 'when is this said-baby to be forthcoming?'

The poor man was startled, as well he might be, at such a question, and scarcely knew what to say.

'Because,' said the old lady, severely, 'this sort of thing won't do for me, you know. Let me see. To-day is Thursday. Come! I'll give you till Saturday!'

'To day's Thursday, and you'll give me till Saturday,' said poor Wide Awake, endeavouring to gather his wits together.

'Yes,' said the old lady. 'I'm going to Lady Towzer's; and I shall leave by the coach which passes your gate at twelve o'clock. If the baby is here by that time, and if it's a boy—I don't care for girls—if it's a boy, and is not too sleepy, I'll do something for it. You understand?'

'And if the baby is not here before Saturday at twelve o'clock?'

'Then so much the worse for the baby! There! that will do. You may mention it to your wife if you like. Now go to sleep, or yawn as much as you please.'

And away she went to her own room, and wrote her reply to Lady Towzer.

She certainly was a very odd old lady!

And twelve o'clock on Saturday came; but as yet no baby. At about

twelve the coach stopped at the gate; the lady's maid and the luggage were put on the roof, and the old lady got inside, after bidding Jonathan a very cold good-bye. Away went the coach at a pretty fair pace for those days, and poor Wide Awake stood staring after it in mute despair.

Now the town of Grasston, where the coach next changed horses, was about seven miles from Jonathan's house by the turnpike road, which made a considerable angle between the two points. As a bird would fly, the distance was not nearly so great.

Rather more than half an hour after the old lady's departure, Jonathan was seen galloping like mad right across country in a straight line towards Grasston. He was riding his old brown hunter, the only one he had left, but as good, a bit of stuff as ever a man crossed. And never did the old horse show it more than on that day, although he hadn't got the music of the hounds to cheer him to his work. He perceived what his master wanted him to do, and he did it, not without some nasty falls, for Jonathan rode him at everything, and he refused nothing, and the pace was tremendous; the programme of a steeple-chase could scarcely have described his course as 'a fair hunting country.' However Wide Awake and his horse arrived alive at Grasston is more than any man can say; but they did arrive there, in an incredibly short space of time, and pulled up at the door of the 'Red Lion.' Jonathan's hat was crushed in, and his clothes were torn and soiled, and his face was flushed and bleeding; and the old horse was blown and covered with foam and mud, and was scarcely able to stand. The landlord came rushing out in affright.

'The coach!' gasped Jonathan; 'where is it? Is it come yet?'

'Gracious, squire!' exclaimed the landlord, 'what's the matter with eo? There's no hunting to-day, I know.'

'The coach!' cried Jonathan. 'The "Tally-ho" coach! answer me—has it passed through yet?'

'Gone through about ten minutes ago—may be a quarter of an hour.'

Poor Jonathan's ejaculations need not be quoted here.

'But what's the matter, squire?' asked the ostler, who, with plenty of other curious people, had gathered around.—'What's the matter? Is the French come?'

'No,' said poor Wide Awake, almost crying from vexation.—'No, but the baby is!'

There was no further chance of stopping the coach in time; and so the old lady went on her way unconscious of what had occurred; and, I dare say, spent her time very agreeably with Lady Tower. She never visited Jonathan any more, and never took the slightest notice of him again; and when she died, it was found that she had left all her money to some distant relatives who didn't want it.

There is no doubt that she was a very odd and very capricious old lady.

And so Cousin Tom came into the world half an hour too late.

And this half-hour which he lost at the start, he was never able to pick up again, though he always seemed to be trying to do so. Of course I am speaking now of the time before he went to India. As a boy, he got more floggings for being late at school than any other fellow there; and yet I have known him lie awake pretty nearly all night, because he would be up early in the morning, and then drop off to sleep about half an hour before it was time to rise. If he had to travel by coach, he always thought it necessary to commence his preparations an hour before anybody else would have dreamt of doing so; and then he would recollect something that he ought to have done the day before; would rush away to do it, and be late after all. He was always in haste, always in a hurry—and yet never in time; for his haste was always to do something that he ought to have done before. He was always trying to pick up that lost half-hour, and never succeeding. If he had an appointment with Smith for twelve, he would pass his door at that hour, in hot haste, to keep a half-past eleven appointment with Jones, whom he would of course miss. Getting back to Smith's place at half-past twelve, he would find that Smith had just gone out; and away he would rush after him, thereby missing his one o'clock appointment with Robinson. Never was there such a fellow. Why, even when he went to India, he must needs go out in a ship that took twice as long as she ought to have done on the voyage; so that she was given up for lost, and Tom, when he did arrive, found that the appointment which he was to have had was filled up; and he had to wait ever so long before he got something to do on an indigo plantation up the country. Poor Tom! His letters to me had for some years been filled with complaints of his bad luck; but lately he had been prospering, had got a plantation of his own; and after many postponements had at length been able

to come back to England for a year's holiday; so that I had supposed that he had escaped from that unfortunate habit, or fate, or whatever it was, of being always too late. This letter from Southampton, however, made me think differently, and brought all these recollections back to my mind. I must say, this letter vexed me a good deal, and I didn't enjoy my Christmas half as much as I had anticipated; but it couldn't be helped. There was nothing serious in Tom's accident, to cause us any anxiety; and we were a very merry little party after all. My friends were all good fellows, and Rose's guests were all charming girls, like dear Rose herself; and as for Rebecca—well, I couldn't do justice to her if I were to write a volume; but the suppers she sent up were the admiration of everybody, and she was always ready to play, and in capital time, too, if not brilliantly, when other people wanted to dance; and she sang—though she had a poor opinion of herself as a singer—whenever it was really desired; and she was great at finding out new and unheard-of methods of redeeming forfeits, and at all those social games which require wit and invention—for it must not be supposed that Rebecca was stupid because she was good; far from it;—and she was at all times ready to do anything to promote the pleasure and happiness of the whole party;—I won't say without thinking of herself, but without allowing her own wishes and feelings to interfere with those of anybody in the house. And I don't see what better person one could wish for at Christmas time, or at any other time, than my sister Rebecca.

At length, after our guests were all gone away, and Christmas was a thing of the past, and the beautiful Christmas weather had given place to the wretched drizzle and fog, then Cousin Tom arrived. Of course I should have gone to him at Southampton, had not a second letter assured me that he preferred being left alone; and when he came, I received him with a pleasure second only to what it would have been if he had come at Christmas; and Rose welcomed him with delight, and evidently expected him to kiss her; but Tom seemed bashful, or else didn't think of it, though he might very well have regarded her as his niece; and Rebecca, of course, was most gentle and kind in her reception of Tom; but then she was gentle and kind to everybody. But Tom was a good deal changed, that is, in appearance, and he looked bilious; and I'm afraid his liver was not

quite right, for he didn't enjoy things as I did. I had to withdraw my veto about curries and the other Indian kickshaws; but it didn't matter so much now that Christmas was over, and Rebecca made them so nicely, that I couldn't help tasting them, and almost liking them myself. And so, in a quiet way, we all got on very well together.

Once, after a good deal of trouble, I got Tom to go with me to the Drury Lane pantomime; but at the very moment when we ought to have started, he found out a number of things that he had forgotten to do in the morning, and which he declined putting off until next day, because he was such an advocate for punctuality; and the consequence was that we didn't arrive at the theatre until after the transformation scene, which I had so much wished him to see; and we couldn't get a good place then; and, worse than all, Tom didn't laugh a bit at the clown's tricks, and went to sleep in the very best part of the harlequinade. It was very provoking! But we did have a cigar and chop at Evans's afterwards,—that is, I had a chop. Tom contented himself with cheroots and wine and water, for he never touched supper, for fear that he should be restless in the night, and consequently, heavy, sleepy, and late the next morning; and so we went home tolerably merry and good tempered after all.

Notwithstanding what I have said about his little failings, Tom was a good fellow,—a very good fellow, and he and I got on capitally, especially in the evenings. He was always ready to stay up until any hour, and would smoke cheroots until all was blue. To be sure he was always looking at his watch, and expressing his fears that he shouldn't get up early in the morning, which indeed he never did; but yet he was never disposed to go to bed, and I generally had to lead the way myself. But we had some nice little cosy chats by ourselves, sitting over the fire at midnight, and smoking no end of cigars and cheroots, and thereby cemented our friendship considerably. Tom got on very well with Rose too, when his first little bashfulness, or whatever it was, had worn off. He was a bit of a musician, and they sang and played duets together very nicely, as I thought, though Rose said he was very often out in his time, which I could very readily believe. Tom, however, was very sensitive as to all allusions to this subject, and he seldom ventured to say much about it to his face. Rebecca, however, was somehow less friendly with Tom

than I thought she would have been, which was a matter of great surprise to me. Kind and good to him she was, of course; that was her nature; but her manner towards him was much more reserved than I had anticipated, and seemed to grow more stiff and less cordial every day. Tom, of course, couldn't help seeing it, and was stiff in return, so that these two were by no means so affectionate in their bearing towards each other as I could have wished, and as my sister's care for his comforts when he came had led me to expect. I didn't say anything to them, because I fancy that in such cases the less said the better; and of course there was nothing to complain of but a little want of warmth; but the thing puzzled me a good deal.

One evening, as we were enveloped in our usual midnight cloud, Tom said in the most abrupt manner—

'Bob, old fellow, I'm going to leave you to-morrow.'

'Leave me to-morrow! why I thought you were going to stay in England twelve months!'

'In Europe, Bob; I don't bind myself to England.'

'But where are you going then? What are you going to do? Why didn't you mention it before?'

'Well, I've been hesitating a little since I've been with you. But the fact is this; it's rather late, perhaps, but I can afford it now: I want to pick up a wife.'

'By Jove! old fellow! I cried, 'I congratulate you!'

'Ain't you rather premature, Bob?' said he; 'I haven't got the lady yet, you know; perhaps I shan't get one to have me.'

'Oh, bother about that!' I said. 'A smart young fellow like you, only about one-and-forty; you'll be all right enough. But what a pity you were not here at Christmas! You wouldn't have had to go out of the house then: we had such a lot of nice girls!'

'Well, Bob, if I had been here, I don't know that I should have made an offer to one of them, however nice they were. The fact is, that now I've waited so long, I want to get the very best that can be had, and I mean to see as many as I can before committing myself to one. I don't care about Indian ladies, and so I'm going to give myself a roving commission, and try what I can do in Europe.'

'Well Tom,' said I, 'do as you think fit; only take my advice, and try England before you go abroad.'



'So I will, Bob; and if I should find the right one, I'll let you know it at once. If you hear nothing about it, you'll understand that I am still in search. At all events, I'll be back before I go to India again.'

'Very well, old fellow, do your best; but must you go to-morrow?'

'Yes, I've made up my mind,' said Tom; 'I've been here a long while, and it's quite time that I should be moving. So now I must toddle off to bed, or else I shan't be in time for the train to-morrow.'

'But let us have one parting cheroot, Tom: it's the last for some time, you know.'

Tom looked at his watch, and shook his head; but we smoked another cheroot apiece, and then went off to bed.

Next morning Tom missed the train, of course; but he caught one later in the day, and set off on his travels in search of a wife.

Of course the ladies of my family were much surprised at the abruptness of our cousin's departure; but I didn't tell Rose what I knew of his intentions. I know how ready young girls are to turn such matters into ridicule, and so I thought I had better hold my tongue. Indeed, Tom himself had hinted to me that such was his wish. But towards Rebecca there was no such reason for silence; and, accordingly, Tom had not been gone out of the house long when I told her the errand on which he was bound. Tom's intentions of getting a wife, and the best that could be got, were very serious no doubt; but still his method of going to work seemed to me to be rather a good joke; and though I didn't wish Rose to laugh at him, I certainly did feel disposed to laugh about it myself, and had no doubt that Rebecca, in her quiet way, would do the same. But I was mistaken in this; for when I looked up, I saw that my sister, instead of laughing, as I had expected, was positively crying! at least, it seemed to me that she had tears in her eyes.

'Why, Rebecca!' I exclaimed, 'what is the matter? You are surely crying!'

'Nonsense, Robert!' she said in a pettish manner; 'how can you say so? I have a cold in my eyes,—that's all.'

'Indeed, Rebecca! I am sorry to hear it, as I know what a troublesome thing it is. But how long have you had it? I never observed it before.'

'Probably not. I didn't observe it myself until to-day.'

'Now, I know what it is,' I said

after a moment's thought; 'I saw you out in the garden to-day without your bonnet: just after Tom had driven away from the gate. Now, Rebecca, this was very imprudent, for it was blowing hard and raining.'

'Nonsense, Robert,' she said; 'it couldn't have been that. I only just went out to pick a flower.'

'Well, what was it then? There must have been some cause, you know?'

'Robert, will you have the hare roasted or in a pie?'

But I didn't choose to have the subject changed so abruptly, before I had done with it; for I can't bear to see people neglecting a thing so important as their eyesight; so I said, after a little reflection,—'Rebecca, I'm afraid you have been trying your eyes too much by sewing. Now do oblige me by wearing glasses. Run up to town with me to-morrow and choose a pair that will suit you. Of course, you wouldn't care for appearance now, as if you were a younger woman. Besides so many people now—'

'Really Robert,' she cried interrupting me in the middle of a sentence, 'you are very tiresome! My eyes are as good as ever they were.'

And she darted out of the room, and so put an end to the discussion. It was evidently distasteful to her, and so I made no attempt to renew it on any future occasion; and, indeed, I didn't again see any sign of the cold in the eyes.

And thus ended Tom's visit for that time; and, with one exception, nothing very particular occurred in our household before we saw him again. This exception, however, was a very particular one indeed. Tom had not been long gone when young Brooks proposed for the hand of my daughter Rose,—proposed to me, that is; for I believe that he and Rose had made it up between them during that Christmas week. Brooks was a great favourite of mine, and was doing very well in his profession, so I had no objection, except that Rose was rather young. In this I was easily overruled, and without much trouble or delay, Brooks carried off my dear little girl, and as she was my only child, her departure, of course, left a great blank in my household. It took some months to get me used to the change; but Rebecca was, if possible, more kind and attentive than ever, and I had become pretty well settled down again, when at last I got a letter from Tom, with the London post mark. I should say that I had heard from him occasionally during his absence; but

his letters contained no intelligence as to his matrimonial projects, nor had he ever given me an address to which I might send a reply.

Never was a man more surprised than I was on reading this letter, which contained a note addressed to Miss R. Wake, and was dated from an hotel in Covent Garden.

The letter ran thus:—

‘DEAR BOB,

‘In accordance with your advice, I first tried England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, Berwick-on-Tweed, and the Isle of Man; then I went to the Channel Islands, and have since visited France, Germany, Italy, and Spain; but nowhere have I seen a lady whom I should so much like for a wife as the very first into whose society I was thrown on my arrival from India. You know who that was. If you approve—as I hope you will—of my proposing for her hand, give her the enclosed. If you have told her the object of my journey, I hope that she may feel more flattered at being deliberately chosen from among many thousands in various countries than she would have been at an impulsive proposal made before I had seen others. Reasonably I think she ought. Should her answer be favourable, call for me here at once, and I will go back with you; if otherwise, come still, but I shall remain here for the few days longer that I should stay in England.

‘Yours sincerely,

‘THOMAS WAKE.’

It certainly was a very surprising letter, especially when I recollected how cool towards each other Rebecca and her cousin had seemed before Tom went away. Of course, I could not object, though I should not have liked my sister to leave me and go to India; but there was little chance of that I thought; and, at all events, I must let Rebecca have the note. I rang the bell for the maid, and sent Tom's proposal up to my sister's room. I wished to collect my thoughts a little before seeing her, so as to hit upon a plan of conveying the refusal without keeping the poor fellow from the house; and I stood in the library, with my back to the fire, trying to think, but able only to utter, from time to time, ejaculations expressive of amazement.

After I had stood so for about a quarter of an hour, Rebecca came in, looking more flushed and excited than ever I had seen her, and holding the note in her hand.

‘Oh, brother!’ she said, ‘I have had such a letter from Tom!’

‘Yes, Rebecca, I know.’

‘And do you know what it is?’

‘Yes, dear.’

‘Oh, Robert!’ and she burst into tears. There could be no mistake about it this time.

‘Never mind, sister dear,’ I said, attempting to console her. ‘He means kindly, I know. Don't cry.’

‘Oh, brother!’ she said, ‘and I thought that in all those years he had quite forgotten me! But how foolish I am to give way like a young girl!’ She smiled, and, with a great effort, recovered her composure.

‘That's right, Rebecca,’ said I. ‘And now will you write to him, or shall I go?’

‘Go,’ said she; ‘go at once.’

‘And what shall I say?’

‘Say only, “Come!”’

‘But he tells me that he won't come if he is rejected.’

‘Ah, but he won't be rejected.’

‘Why,’ said I in amazement, ‘you don't surely mean to say that you will accept him?’

‘Yes, that I will!’

‘What! and go to India?’

‘It would be terrible to leave you, Robert; but, brother, I love him. I have loved him ever since that evening before he went to India, when we walked home together from the gipsy party. I thought that he loved me then. Since, I have fancied that he had forgotten it. It is a long time ago, but I never forgot it, Robert.’

‘Well, Rebecca, I will not stand in the way of your happiness nor of Tom's; but really this is a most amazing thing.’

‘Now go, Robert,’ said she, ‘go at once. You'll just catch the train if you make haste.’

And so I was hurried out of the house and away to the train, scarcely knowing whether I was walking, running, swimming, or flying.

I found Tom anxiously waiting at his hotel, told him of his good fortune as well as my perplexity would allow, and brought him home with all speed.

We didn't talk much on the way, both of us being a good deal wrapped up in our own thoughts. I was like one in a dream, and Tom appeared fluttered and nervous.

When we got to the house, we found Rebecca in the library waiting to receive us. As she shook hands with Tom, trembling a little and blushing slightly, she certainly looked charming, and would not have been taken for a day over thirty. To my surprise,



*Drawn by R. Barnes.*

'Rose married? Married! When? To whom?'

[See page 74.]

Tom's greeting to her was rather stiff and cool; he dropped her hand after holding it for a moment, and made some trifling remark about the weather. I couldn't make it out at all. I didn't want him to have her, but if he was to have her I should have preferred a little more warmth in his manner towards her. Courting wasn't done in that way in my time. I couldn't restrain myself.

'Hang it, Tom,' I exclaimed, 'why don't you kiss her like a man?'

'Kiss her?' said Tom. 'Oh, with pleasure, if my fair cousin will allow me.' And positively Tom coloured up as red as a turkey-cock, while he made the weakest, poorest attempt at a kiss that I ever saw.

Tom was bashful, that was it. And it flashed upon me that I, like an idiot, was playing gooseberry. I moved towards the door.

'Well, Tom,' I said, 'I'll leave you for a bit. You'll know your room, the same that you had before.'

'Stop, Bob,' said Tom, looking frightened, 'I want a few words with you in—in private—that is—'

Tom saw how rude his speech was, and so stammered and made a mess of it. But Rebecca, with a slight bow, walked straight out of the room.

Tom shut the door carefully, and then turned to me with a look which would have made me laugh, if I had not been so angry.

'Bob,' said he, 'I am in a maze! Where is Miss Wake?—where is Rose?'

'Rose?' said I, sharply, for I began to understand, 'what do you want of Rose? Rose is not Miss Wake. Rose is Mrs. Brooks. Rose is married.'

'Rose married? Married! When? To whom?'

'Three months ago. Didn't you know it? But of course you didn't. Married to Brooks, who spent last Christmas with us. Don't you remember? But no. You were not here.'

'And my note, then,' said Tom:—  
'My—my offer? You said she had accepted it.'

'And is it really possible, Tom, that you meant that offer for my daughter Rose, a girl young enough to be your daughter?'

'To be sure I did. I liked her when I was here. I have seen nobody who pleases me so much. And you, Bob, you,—I see it now—you have made the amazing blunder of giving my offer to Rebecca, an old maid who hates me!'

'An old maid? Come, Tom, she isn't

so old as you by years. Hates you? Well, I won't say anything about that just now. Blunder? Hang it, Tom, I call it your blunder. You directed your note to Miss R. Wake. Rebecca is the only Miss R. Wake I know. How should I think upon Rose?'

'And how on earth should I think upon Rebecca?'

'Tom,' said I, after a little pause, 'I wouldn't have had this happen for any money. Cousin Tom, you are a good fellow, an honourable fellow, or I wouldn't say what I am going to say. This will be a sad blow for Rebecca. It is strange—I can't account for it—but somehow she cares a good deal about you.'

'Cares about me?' cried Tom, 'about me!'

'Yes, Tom, in the happiness she felt at receiving your note she opened her heart to me, her brother. She liked you when she was a girl of eighteen.'

'Nonsense, Bob,' said Tom, 'nonsense!' But he looked pleased.

'Mind,' I said, 'I don't believe that she has been in love with you or even thinking about you ever since you have been in India, or even that she would care very much about you now, if she didn't think you cared for her. But, Tom, I tell you in confidence that she keeps a fond recollection of a certain evening when you walked home with her from a picnic party before you went to India. Do you remember it, Tom?'

'Well, yes, I think I do remember something about it. Down in Hampshire, it was.'

'And didn't you make love to her Tom, a little?'

'Well, yes, I fancy I did. She was a pretty girl, then, Bob!'

'And isn't she pretty now, Tom?'

There was another long pause, and then Tom said—

'And you really think she loves me?'

'Sure of it, my boy.'

'But she was so cold and stiff to me!'

'Not at first, Tom. It was only after she fancied that you had forgotten her. I can understand it now.'

Another long pause. And then Tom, slapping his thigh in a manner most energetic for him, cried out suddenly—

'By Jove, Bob, I think I'll let the matter stand as it is!'

'What, the offer?'

'Yes. I see Rebecca with different eyes, Bob, now that you say she loves me. And the memory of old times comes back to me. I did like her. I liked her very much before I went to India. And in point of age, perhaps

after all she would be more suitable to me than a young girl. Besides, I haven't time to seek further. Yes, I've made up my mind. I'll take Rebecca!

'Take Rebecca? Come, Tom, you must put it in a different way from that.'

'Don't quibble about words. You know what I mean.'

'You don't have her with my consent unless you feel that you can love her, and that you are a lucky fellow to get her.'

'But I do feel it. I shall love her. I do love her. Confound it, Bob, don't you stand in my way.'

'But will she accept you when she finds out the mistake? I think not.'

'But need we tell her, Bob?

'Well—hum—No, to be sure, I don't think we need. And by Jove, Tom, we won't!'

'No, that we won't! and now run up stairs and fetch her down, if you can. Make the best excuse possible for my behaviour, and say I am longing to see her.'

So I went up stairs and told some fib, which I hope was a white one, about Tom's having had to consult me on important business which would not bear a moment's delay; and, after some difficulty, induced Rebecca to come down. I left her and Tom together, and in half an hour they had settled

everything, even to the very day which was to make them happy.

In less than a month they were married, and Rose and her husband came to the wedding.

And Rebecca never heard of the mistake we had made until after her first little boy was born. By that time she was so assured of her husband's affection that she could hear it without pain; and he being an honest and honourable fellow didn't like to conceal even that secret from her any longer.

And Tom has often told me that for once in his life, it was a most fortunate thing for him that he was too late.

And about the time of his marriage he was also fortunate enough to gain by being too late in another affair. Thinking that indigo was going down in price, he wrote to his broker to sell, but was too late for the post: put the letter in his pocket to send the next day, and there found it about a fortnight after. But meanwhile indigo, instead of going down had gone up, and it continued to go up; and Tom became so much richer than he had expected, that he didn't go back to India at all, except for a short time, just to settle his affairs.

And so I am inclined to think that Tom made his first appearance in this world quite as soon as was good for him after all!

## CHRISTMAS IN THE STREETS.



you may go to Gravesend and back alone, or you may take your country cousins to the top of the Monument (and a fine bracing air you get there, let me tell you, at this time of the year), or you may call up Professor Pepper's Ghost, a

HE influence of the 'all-mighty dollar' has long been a by-word in the lips of Yankee satirists; but, making due allowance for the additional value of the Transatlantic coin, let me, as a Britisher, call public attention to the corresponding advantages of our omnipotent SHILLING. It is just three hundred and sixty years since the first twelpenny piece was struck. Goodness knows what Christmas luxuries it might have purchased in days when twopence-halfpenny represented the expense per head of my lord's household for meat, drink, and firing; when pigs and geese cost threepence apiece, partridges twopence, and chickens one halfpenny; but in our own day, in this wondrous second half of a wonderful century, is it not pleasant to reflect on what one may enjoy, buy, and achieve with the twentieth part of a pound? Armed with this tiny talisman,

very patent apparition, for the same sum at the Polytechnic. Do you wish to cultivate modern languages? You may rub up your 'French without a Master,' or be rubbed down yourself in a Turkish bath at a similarly moderate charge. Are you a smoker? A shilling will procure for you ten of Messrs. Puffwell's famous cigars, equal in flavour to the finest Havannah, and if so, why give more? as the advertisement ingeniously argues. The entrance-fee to a goose-club, I am given to understand, is only one shilling, though how often that disbursement must be renewed before you become possessed of the highly-inflated bird with a pink bill, whose portrait appears in so many public-house windows at this time of the year, is more than I can tell you. One thing is certain; you may dine for a shilling. I don't wish to boast of the fact, but I have done it, waiter included (I don't mean that I *did* the waiter, for I paid him one penny, his fair and proper honorarium), at a famous place in the City; and a very good dinner it was too, with a pint of good porter in the brightest of pewter pots. Finally, and let me state the fact with becoming gravity, you may actually buy 'London Society' for a shilling; carry home a hundred pages of pleasant print and good sketches to your fireside at this merry Christmas time, pile up the coals, mix your toddy, and read aloud to kith and kin. Perhaps these very lin—ah! too presumptuous pen! One article at least may escape perusal—no doubt deservedly. At this very moment, while I am writing, a dozen other quills may be at work in this very cause—a dozen pencils plying in the self-same service. Let us hope some of us at least will please you, *lector dilectissime*! For my part, I have not the wildest notion what my literary *confrères* are inditing. They are equally ignorant of the nature of this manuscript. Suppose two of us seize upon and endeavour to embody the same idea! It is not impossible. You see we have a common theme—'Christmas,' that is the subject which our master, Mr. Editor, has set us to illustrate, and we must stick to it. No doubt you recollect when you were a fifth form boy at school, Dr. Dactyl's awful voice announcing that 'Veritas' was the quality which you were to celebrate in elegiacs, or that the text for your Sunday's essay must be 'Virtue hath her own reward,' and perhaps you were somewhat alarmed at the novelty of the material you had to deal with. That, however, is the reverse of my case. Christmas comes but once a year, it is true, but every

year multiplies the number of those who write, or sing, or draw in honour of that festive season. Figure to yourself my earnest desire to please, not only the head and chief of our establishment, but you also, my dear sir, and Mrs. Blank, and Mr. Dash, her brother, who perhaps is staying with you, and the young Asterisks, who are also spending their holidays with your children, and some fifty thousand other readers. Imagine, I say, these conditions, and calling to mind all the yule-tide papers you have ever perused, whether on ghosts, soap-dragons, mistletoe, ancient traditional customs, modern family dinners, snowed-up travellers, blindman's-buff, crackling logs, or country fires, prize turkeys in Leadenhall Market, breaking-up at school, jolly parties at home—Christmas, in short, under every conceivable aspect—remember that I am to be perfectly original, and to tell you something that you have never heard before! *Hoc opus hic labor est!*

'It's all my eye and Elizabeth Martin!' cries my friend and fellow-lodger, Mr. Barker, to whom I had read thus far of my manuscript one frosty morning on the 24th of December, 1863. 'The subject is used up, my dear fellow. You can't write a line on it that any one would care to read. Christmas jollity is one of the great fallacies of life. Who believes it now, I should like to know! Wassail-bowls, plum-puddings, merry chimes, cold nooses, and warm hearts—it's all rubbish I tell you—a mockery, a delusion, and a snare! When I was a boy I looked forward to mincepies and the "Illustrated London News," but now, one gives me indigestion, and the other—well it's all very pretty for John Gilbert to make pictures about "Bringing in the yule log," or "Mummers in y<sup>e</sup> olden time," but the yule log is dismally typified in our scuttiful of Wallsend, and the mummers are mummery to us with a vengeance. As for the waits, they have kept me awake every night for the past week with their "Young man from the Country," and that infern—well then, that eternal "Pretty Polly Perkins of Paddington Green," to such an extent that I vow I won't give them a blessed sixpence. Waits indeed! they may wait for their money a precious time before they get any out of me, I can tell you.' And here Mr. Barker laughed a sardonic laugh, which is not pleasant to hear when it proceeds from the larynx of a young man of six-and-twenty.

Ned Barker is a capital fellow in his way, and belongs to that section of humanity whose growl—to use a com-



mon metaphor—is worse than their bite; but when he gets into one of these cynical fits, he certainly is a most gloomy companion, and I began to feel horribly dispirited.

‘Better give it up,’ said Barker, walking to the window. ‘Try something else. You’ll never make anything of it. Look out at the weather. Do you mean to say you can ever hope to get an atom of fun—a ray of sunshine—out of that?’

The snow had been falling thickly all the morning from a dull and leaden sky, and not a sound was to be heard down the whole length of Gower Street but the muffled roll of cabs over the thick soft drift which struck dimly on the ear, and suggested the idea of a dangerous illness and a Usual Precaution.

It was a curious thing, though, that no sooner had Ned finished speaking, than a ray of sunshine *did* make its way by a sudden effort into the window of our second floor front. True it was a very tiny flickering, feeble one, but in it came and no mistake. And what was just as singular, at that moment the booming of a large drum, the shrill cadence of notes from a pan’s-pipe, and the *Roo-ti-too* of Mr. Punch himself, announced the arrival of that incorrigible humorist next door, where he forthwith entered on his usual rôle of comic vocalist, clairvoyant, and murderer, with the greatest spirit and to the intense delight of our neighbour’s children.

‘Come, here are fun and sunshine both,’ said I.

Ned laughed again—this time, a little more amiably.

‘What do you think of Christmas in the streets?’ I asked.

‘What—as a subject?’ said Mr. Barker, with something like contempt in his voice.

I nodded.

‘Won’t do,’ he said, shaking his head dimly. ‘You won’t find a single soul outside who cares twopence about Christmas there.’

‘We can but try, you know,’ said I. ‘Come out for a stroll down Oxford Street, and let us see what we can pick up.’

After a little hesitation, Mr. Barker assented, thrust himself into an overcoat, drew on a ponderous pair of Balmorals, lighted a cigar, and down we went.

‘Clean yer steps, sir? Want the pavement brushed in front of the ‘ouse, gen’lemen?’ asked an impudent looking man with a broom and shovel, whom we found outside the door.

‘Confound the steps and you too!’ began Barker. ‘There! come along, Jack.’

We were just turning down the street, when up came the Punch-and-Judy man, with a grin.

‘I beg your pardon, gen’lemen,’ said he, ‘but it’s werry cold this morning—’

‘I’m perfectly aware of that fact,’ said Ned, with great gravity.

‘And if you would be so kind—gen’lemen—to let me drink yer ‘ealth in something short, I—’

‘Stop a minute,’ said Barker, sternly, ‘do you really want something to drink?’

‘Well, sir, as you ax me—’ the man began.

‘Come along then,’ said Ned, leading the way into a snug little tavern close by. It was one of the old-fashioned sort—no flaunting gin-palace with gigantic gas-lamps—jug and bottle entrances, and plate-glass windows, but a quiet, respectable, red-curtained, saw-dusted establishment of the last century, with a buxom landlady in black satin behind the bar, and a cheerful fire burning behind a very bright-looking fender in the tap-room, which was comfortably furnished with old high-backed settles and Windsor chairs.

‘Three screws of birdseye and a pot of dog’s nose,’ said Mr. Barker to the waiter who had followed us into the apartment aforesaid, and now Mr. Punch-and-Judy, what can I have the pleasure of ordering for you?’

‘Well, sir, if I might make bold—’

‘Go on,’ said Ned.

‘If I might make bold without prejudice to this ere hon’rable company—’

‘Out with it,’ cried Mr. Barker.

‘I was going to ask for three-pennorth of Jamaikerot.’

‘Of WHAT?’ said Ned.

‘Jamaiky rum and ot water, you mean, don’t you?’ said the waiter.

‘Esackly so, young man,’ rejoined Mr. Barker’s representative.

‘Then why don’t you say what you mean and make yourself intelligible to the gen’leman?’ asked the waiter, who looked on our guest with a mingled expression of surprise and contempt.

The delectable compound known as ‘dog’s nose’ having been brought, together with a steaming glass of ‘Jamaikerot,’ Mr. Barker proceeded to fill the bowl of a pipe which he selected from a heap upon the table, and begged the Punch-and-Judy man to take a chair.

That functionary complied with Ned’s request in the very cautious and diffident

manner peculiar to his kind, viz., by occupying the very smallest superficial area of the seat in question, brushing his napless hat with a threadbare sleeve, and after hanging the former article of apparel on each knee by turn, and finding it had an unmistakable tendency to slip from that situation, finally decided in placing it under his chair.

'You must find it very cold and disagreeable going through your performance this weather,' said Ned (whose object evidently was to elicit from the man some abuse of the season).

'Well it do numb one up about the fingers, gen'lemen, a good deal, pettically at the commencemink of the drayma, and before what you may term the action of the piece,' said the man; 'but I generally warms up in the set-to with Judy, and by the time the ghost business comes on, I'm all of a glow. As for the mill with Old Nick at the end, I've known it set me in a prepiration, even in December.'

'Really!' said Ned.

'It's a fact, I assure you, sir,' said the showman, stirring his grog very slowly. 'Put it to yourself, sir' if you was laying about you with a thick stick, and the old gen'l'man a dodging you round about promiscuous, ducking at every blow you gev, and making you waste your breath on hairy nothings as the poet says; why, it's hot work, sir—let alone the dyelog, which takes it out of you as much as anythink.'

'The what?' said Mr. Barker.

'The dyelog, sir, between Punch and the other characters. Sometimes two on 'em at a time—which all,' continued the showman, taking a pull at his tumbler, 'dewolves upon me, and though seemingly easy as seen from the outside, is very trying to the lungs.'

'Don't you put a bird-whistle or something in your mouth for Punch's squeak?' I asked.

'Gen'l'men,' said the showman, setting down his tumbler, 'I don't wish to use no strong language on that pint, but I'd scorn the action, and how ever sich a notion got about among the public has always bin a mist'ry to me. Why, if there wor sich a machine where would be the use of it? I put it to you, gen'l'men—say you've got a beadle's voice, which is graff and surly-like; you've got a doctor's voice, which is both 'aughty and sewery; you've got a Judy's voice, which is more tenderer and deferential; you've got a ghost's voice, which ain't like no voice at all, but a sort of awful how-hawing, as makes the little boys' blood (as I have heard

my pal with the drum and pipe say—*—for, in course, I never see 'em myself*), cream in their veins outside. Last of all, you've got the Old Nick's voice, which is half chuckling, half gloomy and s'pulehral; in short, gen'l'men, if I may make bold to say so, a reg'lar devil of a voice.'

'You forget the hangman,' suggested Ned.

'The hangman's voice,' said Mr. Punch's representative, 'goes with the beadle's. There ain't no distinction between them. If there could have bin, I would have made it, but it's no use, gen'l'men. The human lungs has a limit, and after six changes (including Punch himself), it can't be managed. I have known members of the purfession try it on; but, in my opinion, it has been no go. Well, gen'l'men, you've got these here five voices to deal with, and do you mean for to tell me that any mortal man who can come those voices couldn't come the squeak? Or if he couldn't come it natural, that it is likely he could keep popping that there flat whistle, or whatever you may call it, in and out of his blessed mouth at every change of voice. Gen'l'men, take my word for it, there's no such thing as the flat whistle at all in the case, and whoever first got up the report, uttered a gross calomel.'

Finding that we were not prepared to dispute the point, and that he had nothing more at that moment to say, our guest here applied himself to the tumbler with renewed satisfaction.

'I suppose you like your summer rounds best?' said Mr. Barker, with the same purpose as before.

'Well, no, sir, I don't,' said the man; 'leastways not in London. It's all very pretty in the country—at races and such-like; and many's the half suv'-roign I've had guv me at Epsoom Downs, with a bottle o' champagne, maybe, into the bargain; but arter all 't ain't half the pleasure—no—nor yet the profit either that there is in a good Christmas season in town: for you see, sir, what you gets quick, you spends quick, and that's where it is. I once made four pun twelve. I did, as true as I sit 'ere, one Derby Day; but, Lord, you should have seen how quick that money went: me and my pal was jolly, as you may term it, for three 'ole days, and reg'lar cleaned out we was afore the end of the week; let alone the vexation of playing afore a lot o' boozy swells as don't understand nothink about the drayma, nor take no interest in it, except laughing at Old Nick (which

being the werry moral of the piece, they didn't ought to), or maybe shying a Aunt Sally stick at Toby (there was a cove as called himself a gen'laman, once tried to come that game at Brighton races, and if so be I'd caught him, he should have had one for his nob, he should, the villain!) No', what I says to my pal arter that, I says, Punch is not calculated for the likes of these. Give me, says I, a quiet street in Bloomsbury, with a window full of little youngsters, home for the Christmas holidays, looking for all the world like a lot of rosy 'appy cherubims, I says, with their wings took off and their hair curled. My eyes! how they will laugh, them little 'uns! And what's more, they laugh with you, gen'lamen, and not at you, bless their little 'arts, and that's where it is.'

'And so you really like Christmas best?' said Mr. Barker, in a disappointed tone of voice.

'Well, sir,' said the showman, raising the tumbler to his lips again, 'if I was put upon my affidavit to-morrow, I could say no other. Christmas, you see, is the nat'lal, proper time for fun, and being sich, ev'ryone is prepared to enjoy himself. It may be fancy, but I think there's something in the weather as keeps one up to the mark. I handles the dolls with more sperrit. My pal, outside (a reg'lar borna genius for music, gen'laman, that man has, and no mistake—took to it at nine year old with the Jew's-arp, worked his way up to the penny-whistle; follard the purfession of bones for two years with a nigger band, and can come the banjo equal to any of 'em), my pal, you see, from the werry sense of his situation—mittens and a comforter not being adequate agin a downright frost—my pal he is forced to keep himself warm with exercise; consequently, the drum-sticks is always going, and his head continually lips wagging over them pipes. As for Toby, he's twice the dog this weather to what he is in summer time. No need to pinch his tail at Christmas to make him bark. He lays hold of Punch's nose as nat'lal as nat'lal, and seems to take a pride in it. Whereas, in summer time, whether through sleepiness or fear of hydrophoby, or the flies a worritting him, he's not up to the mark, as you may term it; and so I say Christmas for my money, gen'lamen, and 'eres my service to you, for I hear the drum-a-going outside, and my pal is awaiting for me.'

'Stop,' says Ned, pulling out another half-crown. 'If your pal is as fond of rum and water as you appear to be,

I dare say he won't mind a glass himself. You may keep the change.'

'Sir,' said Mr. Punch's minister, 'you're a gen'laman, and I wish you a merry Christmas.'

Ned made a rather incoherent reply to this salutation, and having taken a final pull at the 'dog's nose', walked with me to the bar, where we paid our modest reckoning, and thence stepped out into the street.

By the time we reached Regent Circus it was twilight, and the vast thoroughfare which runs from east to west of modern London was alive with countless carriages and busy walkers, hurrying to and fro. One by one the street lamps popped up into light, and gas began to flare from every shop, revealing divers treasures. Here, silks and rich brocaded stuffs, gay coloured ribbons, and embroidered shawls, dazzled fair eyes with wondrous splendour. There, muffs, seal-skin jackets, velvet cloaks of triple pile, and all the luxuries of winter-wear, attracted crowds of gazers. Anon the light fell upon plate-glass panes full of brilliant jewellery—watches, rings, scarf-pins, bracelets, necklaces, brooches, pendants and tiaras, which sparkled with a hundred gems and seemed to beg for purchase. Upholsterers put forth their most gorgeous tapisserie and hangings, Turkey carpets, glowing with the rich but chastely associated colour of the East, and showy goods with floral patterns from French and English looms. Embroidered curtains heavy with golden thread—the imitation of an ancient art, such as our grandsires never thought to see revived; while carved cabinets, *or-molu*, and inlaid work vieing with the most costly productions of the Renaissance, old Chinese porcelain and enamelled vases from India, Italian majolica, and 'lustre' plates, ancient armour and *bric-a-brac* crowded the doors and filled up the windows of many a curiosity shop.

As for the toy and stationery warehouses, they are piled high with all that extraordinary assemblage of articles which no one can be said exactly to want, and yet which everybody buys for somebody else at Christmas, including elegant dressing-cases, toilet services—'ladies companions'—bi-valve mother-of-pearl pincushions, gilt camel-and-palm-tree candlesticks, silver cupid-and-wheelbarrow saltcellars, papier-maché inkstands—medievally hinged book-slides—inconvenient but highly elaborated nutcrackers—to say nothing of those savoury-smelling and gentlemanlike travelling-bags, constructed of

Russian leather, and containing, *inter alia*,

- A portable bin for bottles of every sort of scent, from lavender-water up to attar of roses and down again to patchouli.
- A rack, to hold six tooth-brushes, four pomatum-pots, and
- A looking-glass (that most indispensable article to the tourist so seldom supplied at any of our hotels or lodging-houses).
- A corkscrew.
- A bootjack (to fold in four), and
- A pair of boothooks, for 'Wellingtons,' (now so commonly worn).
- An instrument for extracting stones from a horse's shoe (also very useful on a railway journey, as the train might break down, in which case you would be obliged to engage one of the flys which always ply for hire between the stations in case of accident).
- A drinking cup (plated, with *répoussé* decoration).
- A silver key for opening the doors of railway carriages when the guard is out of the way.
- A portable coffee-pot (in miniature, by which a quarter of a pint of coffee may be made nearly as quickly as a waiter could bring it you when ordered, and at not much more than the same cost).
- A blotting-book (8 inches by 5½, fitted with an ink-bottle at one corner, capable of holding sufficient ink for at least three letters).
- A paper cutter, a penknife (thirteen blades), a set of razors, a button hook, and a ruler, all of the best quality and included in the price, only fifty guineas. A decided bargain.

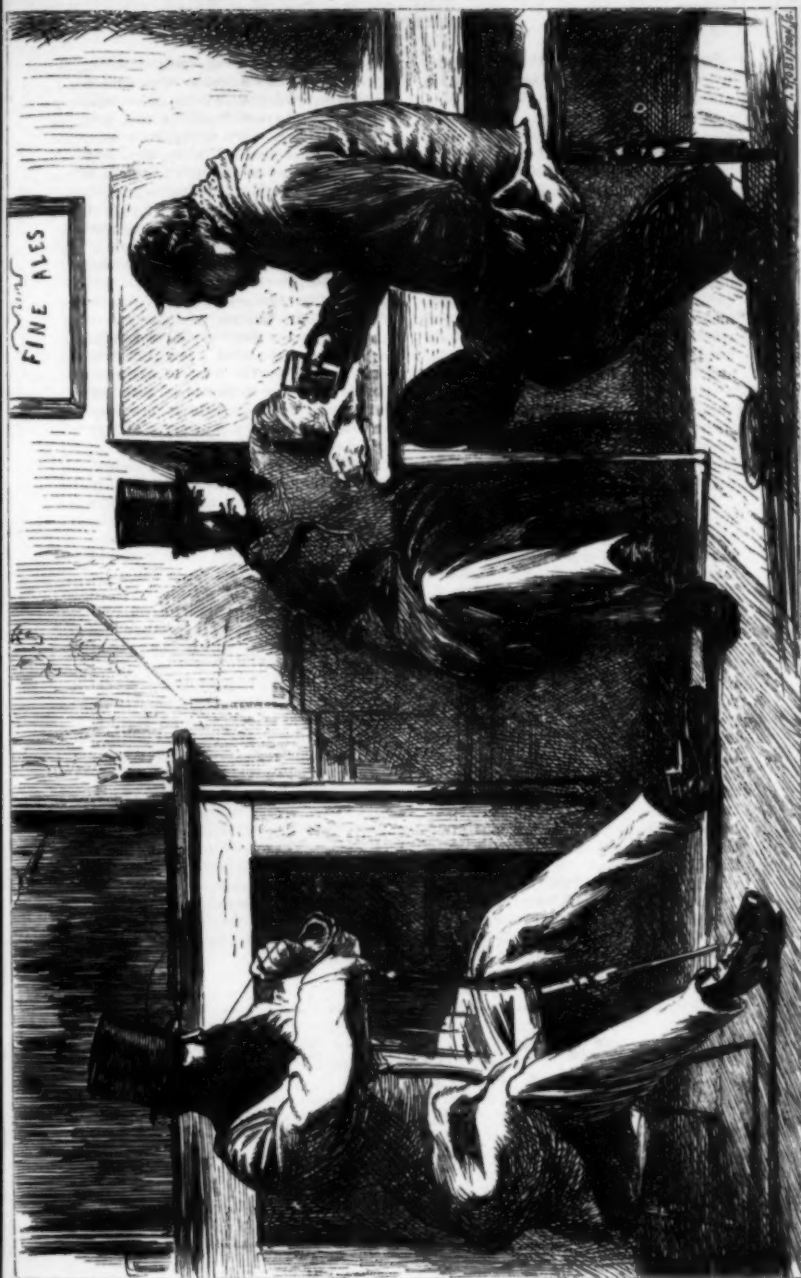
Perhaps altogether, next to the butchers' and poulterers' (which assume exclusive and important relations to Christmas), the grocer's establishment contains more circumstantial evidence of the season than is to be found in any other. To begin with, the primary and original elements of THE RUDDING are found there in great abundance, arranged with all the accuracy of a geological system. There are Plutonic rocks of loaf sugar and conglomerates of 'best moist,' stratified masses of Malaga raisins and erratic blocks of candied-peel embedded in a diluvium of Zante currants between mountain ranges of Pekoe and Souchong in huge canisters, adorned with interesting representations of Chinese gentlemen engaged in the cultivation and manufacture of tea; tempting little round flat boxes of pre-

served fruit, on the covers of which French nymphs and swains languish with mutual rapture in rococo costume and infinitesimal boots. Above all, there is the artificial holly, with a due proportion of red berries, looking quite as bright, and far more enduring, than the natural plant (shall we ever have sham mistletoe I wonder, and will young ladies still hold it good for the traditional privilege?), hanging in gay festoons athwart the window or twisted round the iron columns inside.

As for the confectioners, they have, I admit, deteriorated wofully from what they were in days of yore. Where are the Christmas cakes—those huge, cylindrical, delicious, and eminently unwholesome structures overlaid with a macadamised surface of snow white sugar on a substratum of almond paste? Where are the 'characters'—the kings and queens so beautifully modelled in chalk, and looking like knaves of spades in bas-relief?—Where is the appropriate motto, folded in three, which was invariably found in the middle of their cretaceous majesties when they were broken in two, transversely? Where is the British sailor grasping that very blue Union Jack which was sucked with avidity by young gentlemen in pinafores? the sugar columbine with soluble legs; the yellow lion; the pink cottage; the cupid who quivered on a spiral wire inserted in the pit of his waistcoat? Alas! these emblems of yuletide are fast disappearing—I may almost say—have disappeared from among us. When you and I were ten years old, dear Philogluca, what more gorgeous and soul-inspiring spectacle was there than a pastrycook's shop on Twelfth night? One might buy a Christmas cake from sixpence up to as many guineas! the former sort were inferior, it is true, and humbly decorated with variegated comfits on a white ground; but what transcendent splendour—what ambrosial feasts and well-deserved dyspepsia awaited the lucky winner of the great raffle in fifty shares at two and six!

'Ichabod!' cries Mr. Barker, with gloomy satire, 'Ichabod! the glory has departed from the land!'

'Say rather it has changed its form,' I answer on my side. 'If our youngsters have not Christmas cakes, they have Christmas trees, and after all it is better that chubby, rosy little faces should be lighted up with coloured tapers, glistening from the fir-top, than grow pale and sickly with unwholesome food, *Eccè signum!* Here we are at the German Fair. There was no such in-



stitution as this, Ned, when you and I wore round jackets. Let us turn in and see the fun.'

And here, I protest, Mr. Barker, who had not up to this time even so much as heard of the establishment, thrust his arm through mine, and in we walked together amidst a crowd of mirthful little ladies and gentlemen home for the holidays with happy smiles, and purses full of pocket-money, rushing through the portal, eager for purchase or coming out laden with toys, marshalled by benevolent matrons, neat-looking nurse-maids, or good-natured, middle-aged spinster aunts, of whom there could be but little doubt that to ask was to have, and that from a rocking-horse down to a penny jack-in-the-box there was nothing of all the treasures within that their goodwill might not have procured with as much ease as Aladdin's lamp or the wishing-cap of Signor Fortunatus.

I never could understand by what special affinity of purpose birds and birdcages are associated with toy-bazaars; but it is an incontrovertible fact that they are always found together. The Pantheon and Soho Bazaar have had their aviaries from time immemorial; and youthful frequenters of these haunts of pleasure, after threading endless labyrinths of counter, passing down long lanes of dressing cases, work-boxes, reticules, and toilet-services; exploring groves of cedar ware and crockery, besides running the gauntlet of all those female blandishments from ladies in black bombazine, which captivate the hearts of little boys from ten to twelve—these youths, I say, have long been accustomed to find a solace after their wanderings in regaling the feathered songsters of an inner chamber with stale buns, amid the pleasant sound running water as it trickles from some patent filtering apparatus; and the German Fair is no exception to the general rule. In fact all the birds seemed to be enjoying themselves, and prepared,

after a legitimate and birdy fashion, to make a merry Christmas of it, except some grey, Quakerish-looking doves, who were perched apart from the rest, and coo-cooing in a very melancholy way, with a sound uncomfortably like that which reaches you through the double doors of a dentist's operating-room, while you are awaiting your own fate and turning over a well-thumbed volume of Punch in the adjoining apartment.

I was just going to draw a splendid moral from the contemplation of these gloomy misanthropes for the express benefit of Mr. Barker, when a merry peal of laughter rang out close behind us; and turning round, I saw that gentleman struggling in vain to extricate himself from the embraces of three or four of the prettiest little rogues that ever came out of a nursery. They were Jemmy, and Freddy, and Mopey, and Fluffey, if you please (the last-mentioned names are, I admit, not exactly what their godfathers and godmothers gave them, and I hereby crave the young ladies' pardon for adopting this familiar appellation, but if their stupid old uncle would use no other when he introduced them, is it my fault?). Here I saw Mr. Ned's nephews and nieces chattering away all together in a pretty quartett, of which the eldest performer was certainly not more than ten years old. And a vast deal of capering of tiny knickerbockers, and fluttering of little crinolines, and kissing, and handshaking, and coat-tail pulling, and boisterous romping went on I can assure you. In vain Miss Pinnock, the nursery governess, called the young ladies to order, and whispered salutary counsel into the ears of Masters Fred and Jem. They would listen to nothing—they were in downright mutiny—wasn't it Christmas-time, and hadn't they a fortnight's respite from morning-lessons? Hurry—no dictation, nor double rule of three, nor horrid copies to write like—

*Use Frugality. 1, 2, 3, 4.*

Or,

*Cerxes, King of Persia. B.*



No exercises—no spelling words of five syllables—no dreadful scales to practice on the piano—no Use of the Globes, (of course not, whoever thought there was?) in short, nothing disagreeable at all; but, on the contrary, everything very jolly; for had they not come all the way up from Anerley on purpose to go to the German Fair, and there, of all people in the world, whom should they stumble on but uncle Ned, and mamma had written to him a week ago to ask him to dine on Christmas Day, and he really had never received the letter—fancy now! but he would come, like a good old uncle? of course he would. Well, that was jolly, and he must be sure to bring down his conjuring box, for there would be a lot of people in the evening, and they were

going to have such fun. (It appears that Mr. Barker had established a wonderful reputation as *prestidigitateur* in that quarter, and had a knack of burning ladies' pocket-handkerchiefs and smashing old gentlemen's watches in a most remorseless way before he reproduced those articles by the power of his magic art.) And now come along this way into the gallery. Had he seen the walking doll, or the flying snake? That was the best counter, over there. Come along and look at the toys. At this juncture they took Mr. Barker into strict custody, and marched him about all over the place, hanging on by his hands or coat-tails as the case might be, while Miss Pinnock and I brought up the rear, moralising on the manners and customs of children—on past and



present infantile education—on the merits of 'Mangnall's Questions' as a scientific work, on Christmas festivity and the propriety of mistletoe, snapdragons, and what not.

How many dolls, Jacks-in-the-boxes, flexible babies, woolly quadrupeds, musical waggoners, improved Noah's arks, &c. &c., Ned bought on this occasion I am not prepared to say; but when at the end of their visit a cab was summoned to carry his youthful relations away, it took them a considerable time, and no small measure of patience, to

stow his various purchases inside; and the last thing I saw, as the vehicle drove off, was a splendid rocking-horse of undeniable breed and grooming, with its legs packed in straw, swaying to and fro on the roof, while its future little riders were kissing their hands and hurrying Mr. Barker from the window.

'Ned,' said I, that evening, as we sat over our pipes, 'it's my belief that you're no better than an arrant humbug. What is the use of your pretending such a contempt for Christmas jollity

while you do your very best to encourage it? The money you squandered at that bazaar to-day, sir, was shameful extravagance—that is to say, for a man with your notions.'

'I wish every note I've changed had been spent on as good a purpose,' replied Mr. Barker, lazily. 'Did I say I couldn't enjoy Christmas? Upon my word, Jack, I must make one exception. You know my line, old fellow. I'm not what you call a marrying man. I'm a selfish, blasé, old bachelor, and shan't have any brats of my own. But by Jove, sir, when you *do* come across them, about that age too, is there better company on the whole face of this dreary world? Don't they talk, and laugh, and look at you in a brighter way than then ever afterwards? I listen to 'em as they prattle on, and think I never heard more sacred or more delightful music. Enjoy Christmas? of course they enjoy it. Haven't they everything to make it enjoyable? It isn't the holly alone, nor the snapdragons, nor the mince-pies; no, nor

the morning church neither, but the sort of consciences they carry there. Compare your life and mine, old boy, for the last ten years with theirs, and ask yourself what right we have to complain if our hearts are not as light as they should be at this time?

'*Quare tristis es, anima mea? et quare me conturbas?*' Don't you know the old saw, that we shall find nothing in heaven but what we take there? I think somehow that it's the same with Christmas; and when we grumble that the season is a dull one, and not what it used to be, as I did this morning—why the fact is, we've nothing but ourselves to blame. The turkey is as plump, the pudding as large, the holly is as green, the berries are as red, the fire burns as brightly as it did twenty years ago. It is we that have changed, and lost our appetites and innocence, but if there is any mortal means of insuring good temper and digestion at such a time, I believe it may be found in the company of children.

JACK EASEL.



## THE COLUMBINE'S CHRISTMAS DINNER.



HIS won't do,' said Mr. Wilmington Moggs, as he balanced himself on his toes and heels alternately, looking up and down the dismal High Street of Dullborough; 'this,' he repeated in a more marked and staccato style, 'will not do.'

It was two or three weeks before Christmas, and the market town of Dullborough had proved its claim to its title by a very general depression in everything. Business was dull, pleasure was dull. A general gloom had settled upon the place, and the quaint little country town was decidedly in the dumps. Of course, amusements had suffered from the prevailing despondency. When we say amusements, we allude to the theatre, where empty pits and yawning boxes stared the performers in the face every evening, and insolvency stared the manager out of countenance at all times. Mr. Wil-

lington Moggs was not a man to sink under trifles; but as he stood upon the steps of his Thespian temple, and looked up and down the High Street of the town which refused to listen to the voice of the dramatic charmer, his heart failed him, and something very like a tear trickled in the managerial eye, and, running down the managerial nose, fell upon the ill-conditioned pavement, mingling with the half-melted snow and half-frozen mud which were having it their own way in Dullborough about that time. It would be interesting, though perhaps somewhat melancholy, to trace the history of the theatre in one of the third-rate provincial towns. What a record it would present of overweening vanity, general incompetency, stupidity, and obstinacy. When a wanderer finds himself in one of these places, and, being bored with his own company, hails a playbill with delight, and rushes to the theatre in a state of pleased expectancy, nine times out of ten how woefully is he disappointed, and how depressing are the two long hours he spends in the temple of the drama. The dingy and faded decorations, the meagre band—small, but not united—the imperfect toilet and memories of many of the actors, the dismal scenery and make-shift appointments, and lastly, the empty condition of the 'auditorium,' all combine to reduce him to a low and dispirited condition which becomes gradually unbearable as the performance proceeds, and reaches a climax of speechless misery when, after a feeble tinkling of a small bell, a comic singer, in a state of chronic wretchedness, rushes spasmodically upon the stage and scampers through his task with the wildest desperation. At the conclusion of the season the manager votes the inhabitants bores, but the inhabitants have their own opinion, and declare that the manager has not given them a worthy entertainment; and a new class of theatrical caterer, which is springing up and succeeding, has evidently thought with the inhabitants.

Once on a time the Dullborough theatre did well; but the manager did well too, for he was a man of taste and appreciation; and there are still people in the town who remember when a certain little genius, with a harsh voice and a piercing eye, strutted and fretted his two hours upon its tiny stage to the tune of a hundred pounds a night. Bright recollections are cherished too by many of a merry-faced, laughing lady, whose voice rang through the theatre, and whose cheery laugh, as she rallied 'Sir Peter,' had shot through the silk waistcoats of the local bucks and driven the Dullborough bachelors to despair. But evil days had fallen on the property. The manager was too conservative to march with the times; he forgot that fresh audiences with fresh tastes must be consulted, and he gave them the comedies and tragedies they knew by heart, *ad nauseam*; and the public pined for novelty. Then he lost some of his best people, who got engage-

ments in London; then he let the theatre to an unscrupulous adventurer; finally, he went to America, leaving the 'circuit' to be taken by anybody with sufficient perseverance, not to say hardihood, to tackle a depreciated property. Newspapers and playhouses seldom go a begging. Prove incontrovertibly that neither will pay its expenses, still some rash speculator will try his hand with it; and so it was with the Dullborough theatre. First of all there came a jaunty gentleman who had plenty of money, and who had great notions of producing everything in London style, and who put everything on his stage that had made a metropolitan success, utterly regardless of the causes which led to that success in town. Thus a flimsy French trifle, which had been made the vehicle in London for the exhibition of Miss Pamela Fitz-jones's golden hair and undeniable legs, and which had succeeded simply from the popular appreciation of these special attractions, failed dismally in the country theatre, from the fact of the heroine being intrusted to the lady who was engaged for that 'line of business,' and who, though admirable as a chamber-maid or a country wench, had hair which was not golden by any means, and lower extremities of great pedestrian power, but which were scarcely suited to the sylph-like nature of the character represented. Consequently the country critics hissed vociferously and with good cause, and the manager tore his hair and shortly afterwards took to stimulants in his bitter disappointment. Then followed panoramas, wizards, scientific and unscientific lecturers, minstrels of all nations, and swindlers of every clime. A thundering denunciation of the governing classes would be followed by a comic monologue of a melancholy character given by a mild young man in a seedy evening suit, who passed much of his time under a table, from which he would emerge with another name and another wig, but with a voice which no amount of polyphonic pumping could, even for a moment, disguise. Sometimes a celebrity would attract an audience within the dilapidated walls of the poor old playhouse; but there was a blatant music hall of large proportions which was more extensively patronised; and as that establishment gave a semi-dramatic entertainment, with accompanying attractions previously confined to public-house parlours, there really seemed little hope for the Dullborough theatre, and people ceased to consider it respectable. The final blow, perhaps,

was given it by Mr. Reginald Rokeby, who, having failed signally as an actor of small parts, naturally felt that he had flown too low, and that his sphere was a starring and a managerial one. Being united to a wife, who to aspirations even loftier than his own added an incompetency which was marked and general, it was scarcely to be wondered at that a very short series of the standard drama, with Mr. and Mrs. Reginald Rokeby in the principal characters, should have an effect upon the property of a more depressing nature than all previous managerial efforts put together. The next possessor of the dramatic throne of Dullborough was a pantomimist, who called the dialogue of the dramas 'cackle,' despised every piece which did not admit of perpetual 'broadsword combats' and 'character dances,' and insisted upon lighting the blue fire in the 'screen scene' of the 'School for Scandal.' When, after a long interval, the intrepid Moggs rushed at the property like the leader of a forlorn hope, the inhabitants shook their heads and threw up their eyes and scarcely paused to skim the yellow bills which announced the 'Grand Metropolitan Company, new dramas, celebrated artistes,' &c.; they had been taken in so often, those once confiding playgoers, and had learnt to look upon managerial prophecies with such distrust. Mr. Moggs found this to his cost. His company was not a metropolitan one, it need scarcely be said, neither were his artistes celebrated. Still he was an improvement on many previous managers; but trade was dull, and the drama had lost its old supporters; and on the Saturday of the third week or so before Christmas, Mr. Wilmington Moggs, as we commenced by stating, balanced himself on his toes and heels alternately at his theatre door, and declared in emphatic accents that 'it would not do.'

Many a man and many a manager has said the same in the like situation. Many a man and many a manager having said it, has given up the struggle, closed his theatre, and betaken himself to another spot. Manager Moggs, however, was on his mettle. It might be urged that in a pecuniary sense, manager Moggs had very little to be on, possibly; but though out of funds, he had an unlimited supply of pluck, and he was not going to give in without a final battle with fate; so with the avowed determination of buckling himself for the fray, he turned upon his heel and re-entered the Thespian temple over which he presided.

The company had assembled for the proximate purpose of rehearsing, but also with the ulterior view to salary; for it was Saturday, that fatal day for paymasters in general, and unlucky theatrical speculators in particular. Moggs's salary list was not heavy; but light as it was it outweighed the receipts of the past week, and well the company knew it. A shopman who does not pay his assistants has a bad time of it. A householder who cannot discharge his servants' claims trembles as Jane admits him or Susan places his dinner before him with a flop. The manager of a theatre meets with kindlier treatment, for actors are nearly always soft-hearted, their generous natures are keenly alive to sympathy, selfish in trifles, when it comes to the push they seldom fail to come out bravely. Moggs's company was no exception to the rule. Every man and woman present trembled as he or she thought of 'treasury time;' but there they were powdering away at 'Black-eyed Susan,' and 'The Lonely Man of the Ocean,' (Moggs was determined to give the 'gods' a good saline Saturday night of it), as if they were all expecting bonuses for good behaviour. The Lonely Man (Mr. Ferdinand K. Pilcher) in particular was bawling himself hoarse without the least occasion, considering his audience consisted of only one—an old female with a dustpan in the pit.

Moggs, with his hand under his coat-tails, walked down to the footlights, and facing his company, gave a prolonged 'Hem!' and then motioning the Lonely Man to cease, prepared to address his hearers.

It was so unusual a circumstance for Moggs to interrupt a rehearsal, that his stage manager, Dropley, stared in the blandest amazement, and stood, with a pinch of snuff between his finger and thumb, in the attitude of the Scotch gentleman at the tobaccoist's door, who is always on the point of raising it to his nose, but, as the late Mr. Wright used to say, 'from motives of economy never does it.' The Lonely Man, bringing himself down with a jerk from the poetical to the commonplace, observed, 'Halloo, what now governor?' The 'leading lady,' who had two children waiting for her at her lodgings, and a husband in a lunatic asylum, turned a little pale, and smiled very, very faintly. Gummitt, the low comedian, paused in his whistling; and the rest of the performers fixed their wondering eyes upon Moggs, whilst their imaginations pictured every variety of coming an-

nouncement from a bespeak from the mayor to a refusal of the manager's licence.

'Ladies and gentleman, beg pardon for interrupting, but you're all pretty well up in 'Black-eyed Susan,' and 'The Lonely Man,' I know, and our mutual friend, Dropley, will excuse me, of course.' And the manager took off his hat and ran his fingers through his thin hair.

The mutual friend took his pinch of snuff and replied—

'Certainly, sir; the Lonely Man can wait I'm sure.'

The Lonely Man not only looked as if he could wait, but evidently considered it a relief; and the rest of the company came round the manager, presenting somewhat the appearance of a grown-up school ranged in class before the head master.

'Ladies and gentlemen,' said Moggs, a little uneasily, and looking over their heads very hard at the back wall, on which was painted a sky of an Italian hue, and which served the purpose of unlimited distance for the 'set' scenes. 'Ladies and gentlemen, as you know, I am not a particularly faint-hearted sort of man. I'm not one to give in, not one to care about bad business in slack times, or a star walking off with the pull of the profits, if so be as there are profits.' This, with a knowing wink at Ferdinand K. Pilcher, who had been much gratified at the lukewarm nature of the reception accorded a tragic star from town, to whom Ferdinand K. Pilcher had been obliged to play seconds.

The leading tragedian smiledardonically, folded his arms, and assumed his accustomed frown.

'I think you will admit I'm not one to give in to trifles, am I?'

Thus directly appealed to, the company could only murmur sympathetically.

Fortified by the spirit in which the commencement of his oration was received, the manager proceeded in a louder key and with a more erect bearing.

'Very well, then; so long as one can live—so long as one can pay one's way and all that sort of thing, my motto has always been, *Nil desperandum*; every cloud has a silver lining, it's a long lane that has no turning, and—a—all that sort of thing' said Moggs, hard up for another proverb; 'but there are times when the stoutest heart fails a man, when—the snow being on the ground and combined with mud—when a mayor, to whom one generally looks for some patronage, objects to the drama, which, of course, we all pity his ignorance; but that's neither here nor there—

and when there seems no chance for a man, last night's receipts being so low that I shouldn't like to mention 'em in the presence of ladies, why, what I say is *this*—What's to be done? Who can suggest something to be done? because if anybody can suggest anything to be done, by George, ladies and gentlemen, I'll do it!"

The manager brushed up his scanty locks and gazed round with an air of extreme daring, balancing himself, as was his custom, upon his toes and his heels alternately.

Every member of the company had been thinking over what was to be done for many days. Those who were most alarmed at the coming season, and least attached to Moggs, tried their best for fresh engagements, and one or two had succeeded; but others had driven it too late, theatres having engaged their Christmas companies long ago. So the best thing to do was to make a virtue of necessity and stick to Moggs.

Melodrama wouldn't do, that was quite certain. Moggs had spent a small fortune, he declared, in blue fire, and had nearly burnt down the building in his zealous 'blow up,' at the end of 'The Miller and his Men.' Tragedy and comedy didn't draw a shilling; and as for farces, the bill the property man had brought him for broken plates, Moggs declared, was enough to drive a man wild. Burlesque had been tried; but the company having to study two other pieces for the same night, and only having a couple of hurried rehearsals, did dreadful things with the puns and parodies, and mangled the metre cruelly. Moggs made the common mistake that the playgoers liked their entertainment to be served hot and hot, and he looked upon four nights as really a 'sensational' run for a piece. As nobody replied to Moggs's appeal, there seemed nothing for it but to proceed with the rehearsal.

At this moment, however, little Lawton, the 'second old man' of the company, elbowed himself gently to the front and said:—

'Mr. Moggs, may I hazard a suggestion?

I should think you might, and only too happy to hear you, Lawton, I'm sure,' replied the manager.

Little Lawton was a wretched actor, but a very shrewd, gentlemanlike old fellow, who was respected by all who knew him.

'As everything has been tried but one thing, and as it's just upon Christmas, I should suggest that one thing,' said Lawton, smiling.

'Which is—' asked the manager.

'A pantomime! a grand comic Christmas pantomime!' And little Lawton looked round triumphantly.

Moggs's breath was taken away. He ran his hand through his hair for the third time, and stared around him.

'By George! Eh? I don't know though. 'Pon my life! Eh, Dropley, what say?' asked Moggs.

The magnitude of the undertaking seemed to appal the company.

'Could it be possible, Dropley?' asked the manager.

'As to its being possible, everything is possible,' replied Dropley, with a waive of his hand; 'the question is the money, you know.'

This was an unpleasant subject, and Moggs declined to pursue it, waiving it aside in the same manner that Dropley had disposed of the possibility question. The difficulty was in the gigantic nature of the undertaking, as requiring an amount of courage and combination apparently overwhelming.

'Where's your harlequin?' asked Moggs, addressing Lawton, as if he was the sole arbiter in the business.

'Tadcaster can dance,' replied Lawton.

'As for that I could get through it, I dare say,' put in Tadcaster, with a scarlet countenance.

'Clown?' said Moggs.

'Here we are,' exclaimed Pond, the 'second low comedian,' throwing himself into the stock attitude, and rolling his eyes. Pond had panted for the opportunity, and would have walked to the land's end to sing 'Hot Codlings' in character.

'My daughter will play Columbine,' said Lawton; 'and having been taught by Madame—'

'Yes, yes, we know all that,' interrupted Moggs, who was exceedingly excited and puzzled as to whether he should make up his mind to the tremendous venture.

He decided in favour of doing it; and leaving the 'Lonely Man of the Ocean' to continue his rehearsal, retired to his room to think over the subject for the grand comic Christmas novelty that was to thrill the public and fill the theatre.

Little Lawton having pocketed his trifling salary—that is, as much as Moggs could give him of it, for the exchequer was very low and the manager really unable to do more than he did, which was little enough—trudged along the back streets of Dullborough until he arrived at his mean lodgings over the baker's shop, where he was staying with his only daughter, Lucy, until





*Drawn by Adelaide Clouston.*

[See page 90.]

such time as fortune should offer them a better engagement elsewhere.

Little Lucy Lawton was as pretty a girl as you would come across in a day's walk, and probably much prettier, for as I take my day's walk I don't find that pretty girls predominate, and I've no doubt, reader, you will agree with me, that very pretty girls are rare. Now Lucy was a very pretty girl, with a slight trim figure, with a plump and perhaps rather too round face, with pearly teeth which you saw whenever she smiled, and she smiled a good deal, with pleasant, intelligent, brown eyes that looked good, and neat fair hair braided smoothly and not 'frizzed' up into a fluffy cloud of artificial curl. She looked like a little English lady, though she danced between the pieces to a parcel of stupid leering louts, a sailor or so, and a half-dozen boys, of an evening, and enjoyed doing so, too, for her delight was dancing, and she had all sorts of golden dreams at night, of a crowded London theatre, a mass of waving hats and handkerchiefs, and a shower of beautiful bouquets, as she finished her *pas*. She would dream of all this, think of it, ay, and talk of it, too, when her father was in low spirits and worried with painful recollections.

Many a night, after the theatre, as he sat staring at his little pinched up face, with the tears in his eyes, little Lucy would steal softly to his side, and taking his hand in hers, as she leant her head upon his shoulder, talk in a low but cheery voice about the wonderful chances many people had, and of her certainty that some day she would get hers and do great things; and then they would live together in a pleasant little house of their own, and 'Father' should never go near a theatre unless he liked. Lucy Lawton could not only dance, but she had great dramatic instinct, a fresh, unstaged voice, and manner very charming, but completely wasted on the few idlers who were used to strolling into the Dullborough theatre.

A wonderful manager was little Lucy, though her father was severe upon the matter of shopping, and would insist upon purchasing everything himself. Indeed, he guarded the little girl with a tender watchfulness, for he loved her with the deepest affection, and prayed every night of his life that she might pass through the perils that surrounded her in her profession unscathed—that he might live to see her secure in the protecting care of a good and honest husband, one who would appreciate his darling daughter and love her

worthily and well. Wherever Lucy went she met with compliments and was admired; but she had left her heart in London, and listened without a flutter to the soft, foolish speeches people would make to her despite the presence of her father, who hovered about her in a fidget, as the parent bird does when anybody appears peculiarly interested in the little ones. Left her heart in London had Lucy, with as honest a youth as any within the sound of Bow bells, young Charley Fanshawe, under clerk to a solicitor, who had lodged in the same house with the Lawtons, and who had never told his love, but had not let concealment do the work of the worm in the bud, inasmuch as his big speaking eyes had not allowed him to conceal his sentiments, but had conveyed his admiration a thousand times in a manner there was no mistaking.

But Charley's salary was small and his notions of honour were great, so he held his tongue on the subject, and was very spooney and respectful, much to little Lucy's chagrin. The lawyer in whose office young Fanshawe was a subordinate, derived much of his business from theatrical sources; combined with his legal practice was a little bill discounting, and the potestates of some of the London theatres were on intimate terms with him, for managers and money-lenders are frequently very friendly and familiar, as is well known. Much as Lawton desired that his child should wed a respectable and worthy man, it was a question whether he would have been overjoyed at a proposal from young Charley Fanshawe, whose salary was trifling and prospects not very remarkable, though he was a favourite with his employer, who appreciated his brisk manner and attention to his duties. In his inmost heart the little old gentleman nourished a dim hope that his daughter might make a great match. 'More unlikely things have occurred,' he would hardly trust himself to whisper softly when alone, 'much more unlikely things; she's lovely, she's accomplished in her little way; she's the manners of a princess, and she's a lady.'

This was always the climax—she was a lady, and took after her minted mother in heaven. Old Lawton had been in a good position once, many years ago, and had given private theatricals in his own house, and been immensely applauded by his easily-pleased audience. Poor fellow! he had found out what a stick he was since,

though. He had known long years of bitter trouble—that poor little broken-down actor the gallery despised, and he had borne up better than many braver folks, and repined less than many a stronger man. His misfortunes might have been heavier than other people's, but other people didn't possess a child like his. Fortune had dealt him many a hard blow, but had left him his little Lucy. He would pass his hand over her pretty hair, and place his arm round her waist, of a night, as they sat out the small fire after their scanty supper, and look into her eyes through a mist of tears that would arise to his own despite all efforts to control them, and he would try his best to check the sob that struggled in his throat; for he was overworked, that poorly-paid old man, and would break down sadly at the close of his toiling, hurrying, worrying day, sometimes in spite of everything. The demon Hurry was ever at his heels; hurry at his confusing rehearsals; hurry whilst trying to cram the words into his poor head; hurry at his comfortless meals; hurry during his scrambling performance. A glimpse of quiet after all was done at night, merely a glimpse. Oh! who could tell the calm joy he felt when he knew that his work for *that* day was over, and that he might sit until the last cinder flickered out, with his daughter's little head upon his breast, her soft voice prattling of pleasant prospects, and her loving arm twined gently round his neck.

Greatly startled were the inhabitants of Dullborough by the big bills which came out in a few days, announcing the grand comic Christmas pantomime of 'Harlequin Blue Beard and the Secret Chamber, or the Twentieth Wife and the Spangled Demon of the Stalactite Glen.' A stalactite glen was a startler, puzzling alike the geologist and the general public. It was the brilliant notion of the scenic artist, Mr. Pepper, who was an inventive genius and an invaluable person in a provincial theatre. Pepper could paint quicker than any other man in the profession, he declared; and there was a breadth and vigour about his touch that were really tremendous. In a couple of hours he would transform an 'interior' into a leafy wood, or vice versa. It was true the leaves were not picked out with *præ-Raphaelite* minuteness, and would have given a close observer some trouble to determine to what particular trees they belonged; but there was no getting over the

gnarled trunks, the knotted branches, and the powerfully blue sky, visible through the interstices. The prospect of a pantomime to the ardent Pepper was delightful, and he declared that the stalactite glen should become the talk of Dullborough, and of the surrounding neighbourhood for miles, sir, miles!

Pond, the second low comedian, was transmogrified into Signor Trampoletti from the principal continental theatres; for, as Moggs very shrewdly observed, the people would never believe in Pond pure and simple as clown, having been accustomed to look upon him as an ineffective member of the company, which indeed he was, for his 'study' was most defective and his talent lay in his heels. In like manner the youth who aspired to harlequin had a foreign name given him; and, perhaps, taken on the whole, a programme containing a greater quantity of untruth generally, had never been issued from a printer's establishment. The expense to which the impecunious Moggs was described therein as having gone to, made him blush as he corrected the proof. He actually felt guilty as he knew the cold eye of the grimy-fingered printer's boy was on him. But he persevered, he put his shoulder to the wheel, he talked largely of the coming wonders of Christmas, and Dullborough, though incredulous, was decidedly anxious.

One person in the troupe there was no necessity to disguise with a borrowed name. Little Lucy Lawton, the columbine, could stand and pirouette on her own merits, for she was literally 'up to every caper,' as the street saying has it, being an accomplished little dancer, who could not only balance herself on her toes till the spectators expected to see them snap off short, but who had a winning archness, a vivacious manner of doing the most trifling action on the stage that at once stamped her as an artist. She felt everything she did. And Moggs, after watching her early rehearsal, declared that the representative of 'Fatima, afterwards Columbine,' would turn the head of every apprentice in Dullborough. The author of the libretto of the Christmas novelty had not confined himself to strict poetic rules in the composition of the 'comic opening.' Moggs had fished it out of a boxful of pieces, and Pepper, who was fond of scribbling, undertook to 'write it up,' which he did in a bold and eccentric fashion, introducing the names of the principal shopmen very freely, and

throwing in perpetual 'local hits,' without any very great consideration for the context. Thus Abomelique, shortly after entering, observed—

'That's where my Fatima resides I know,  
For first-rate hats to Mr. Tompkins go.'

And then again, when Selim insults him, the gallant young Spahi, in a courageous but somewhat irrelevant manner, remarked—

'How dare you talk to me when you're aware  
That noble-hearted Thomas Jones is mayor.'

And so on, the whole composition exhibiting, the manager declared, a talent which, if he had a London theatre, should be fostered at all hazards. At first the subject of the pantomime was made a mystery of. Gradually, however, cerulean hints were dropped, and the word 'Blue' was posted about the town in conspicuous points, giving rise to much conjecture and—Dullborough being a rather radical place—considerable political unpleasantness. However, the addition of the word 'Beard,' a few days after, set matters right, and the public smiled, actually smiled, which was not an ordinary circumstance in that prim provincial spot, I can tell you.

But whilst all these brilliant preparations were going on, whilst that stanch dramatic athlete, Moggs, was priming himself for the final 'round' which was to settle his opponent ill-luck and leave Moggs with his laurels and the pecuniary stakes—whilst this struggling and contriving and managing to make a show on Boxing-night was taking place, how was it with the human bees in that dingy little hive in Dullborough High Street? Badly enough, be sure. There were heavy hearts in the bosoms of those bounding pantomimists; and the clown's hoarse laugh had something of a saddened tone in it as he tumbled on to the narrow stage, and went through the 'rally,' and slapped away at the pantaloons as a matter of course. To tell the truth, Mr. Wilmington Moggs's talented double company of dramatic and pantomimic artistes (we quote the bill) was in a state not many degrees removed from starvation. Moggs had not only stopped full salaries, but during the week previous to Christmas, paid none whatever, his theatre being closed.

So the company had double rehearsals and augmented appetites; and Moggs, poor fellow, was run aground firm and fast upon the Hard-up rocks, and could not choose but wait until such time as the good ship Pantomime

should come and relieve him in his sore distress.

Little Lucy was a wonderful manager, but she could not make soup out of nothing at all; and there was a plentiful supply of that unsatisfactory article in poor old Lawton's larder. He was a bad borrower, and, had he not been, there was nobody to borrow from in Dullborough. His landlord was as poor almost as himself, and was selfish and unfeeling into the bargain. So the weary days went on, and it came to be the morning before Christmas day, and the great, fat, luscious joints of beef made little Lucy's mouth water as she trudged home from rehearsal. Lawton had experienced many and many a miserable Christmas day, but the morrow bid fair to beat them all. He had parted already with every available article; his daughter had no trinkets, and I should be sorry to say how shabby her few clothes were. It was a sadly trying time for all those brave men and women who formed Moggs's company, and they bore up wonderfully, considering; but none of them were so painfully placed as the poor little Columbine and her helpless father, for they were without a soul to assist them, and saw no means of getting a dinner upon Christmas day. Meanwhile the merry boys and girls in Dullborough, home for the holidays, spelt the yellow bills that talked of the coming joys in store for them at the theatre, where papa had promised to take them, and passed semi-sleepless nights in anticipation of the comic Christmas pantomime.

Charley Fanahawe was yawning at his desk, with nothing particular to do. The article clerk had gone home into the country, and Prodggers was asleep, and, as Charley imagined, a little intoxicated; for he snored, and breathed hard, and had altogether a 'festive' look about him, as if he had been talking a good deal about jolly old Christmas to his numerous acquaintances during his messages of the morning. But Mr. Mulliner, the wary lawyer, was hard at work at his letters in his own room. Business first, pleasure afterwards, was Mulliner's motto; and it must be confessed he went in very earnestly for both.

In bounced Mr. Algernon Bushby, with a red face and an excited manner, and Mr. Mulliner, coming out to speak to Prodggers, met Mr. Bushby in the clerk's office, and shook hands with him. Mr. Bushby was a London manager, and, like most London managers, a

couple of days before Boxing-night, had a good deal on his mind. But Mr. Bushby had more on his mind, apparently, than is ordinarily the case.

'What's the matter?' asked Mulliner, smiling.

'Don't laugh, Mulliner,' replied the excited Bushby, 'don't laugh, or I shall have a fit, or something. She's done it!'

'Who's she?—and what's she done?' asked the imperturbable attorney.

'Why, hang it, Jane Estelle, she's gone—cut—bolted—run away with a Count Something—married!'

'Well, what of it?'

'What of it!—ha, ha! Why, she's my columbine, signed and sealed. There's not one to be got for love or money, that I can put before my audience. I'm in a dreadful fix, grin as you may, Mulliner.' And the manager sank upon a seat and wiped his brow.

'Surely one of the ballet could—'

'One of the ballet!—and there's Bertram arranged the whole business, and says if one of them's taken out it will upset everything he's done. Besides, there's not one good-looking one amongst 'em; and Estelle was lovely; and a pretty columbine is half the battle.'

The manager had himself been a dancer and pantomimist in his day, and magnified the matter perhaps.

'If it had been the Giant, we could have got another fellow to speak the lines. It's all shouting; nobody hears it in the masks. If it had been the Dame Diddlecumdaisy, or the Good Fairy, or the Jack, it might have been got over; but—there, I'll give up the whole business. It's enough to make a man go mad. I've been to the agent in Bow Street; but every soul on his books is engaged. Christmas is a sort of theatrical cormorant, and swallows 'em all.'

Charley Fanshawe's heart beat double quick time, and slipping off his stool, he stood before the manager with a crimson countenance, and bowing, spoke thus:—

'I know a young lady, sir, who would be the very thing. She is a first-rate dancer, very young, very pretty, and very—'

'Cheap?' put in Bushby, all the manager asserting itself, now that there seemed a way out of the difficulty.

'Whatever salary you might pay her she would be cheap; for she's one in a million.'

'Upon my word, Fanshawe, you are wonderfully enthusiastic,' said Mulliner, not displeased by any means with the youth's earnest, but perfectly respectful manner.

'Yes, sir,' replied the clerk, 'I am; for I know her to be as good a girl as ever breathed; and I'd wager my life that she'd be a tremendous hit.'

'And where is this young lady who's to astonish the town?' asked Bushby.

'She shall be at the theatre in time to rehearse, and she'll do more in one rehearsal than any other girl in twenty. She is a finished dancer, and has brains as well as ankles; and, take my word for it, sir, she's beautiful.'

There was no getting over it. Bushby told the clerk to send for her by all means; and in ten minutes the message was flashed away to Dullborough.

Lawton was hungry and dead and enough when the telegram arrived; but he was the soul of honour, that shabby little country actor, and he put aside the paper, for he would not leave his struggling manager at such a moment. But the manager happened to drop in very shortly afterwards. He had opened his box-office, and the money had poured in for places, and the worthy Moggs was making a round of his company, and dividing the spoil like a generous-hearted fellow as he was. Would he hear of Lucy refusing such an opening? Certainly not. Miss Meredith was dying to dance, and she was good enough for Dullborough, and Lucy should start for London by the next train, if he carried her to the station in his arms.

The Columbine's Christmas dinner!—such a Christmas dinner at Charley Fanshawe's lodgings as had never been discussed upon that first floor within the memory of man. Such a piece of beef, done to a turn by Charley's landlady—such a steaming pudding (pronounced perfect by Lawton, whose taste in culinary matters had once been proverbial)—such a bowl of punch, brewed by the dear old fellow himself—such tears of genuine happiness in the good eyes of the little girl! Perhaps, too, the toasts of the Queen, the founder of the feast, the Dullborough manager, and the London potentate were not received with enthusiasm. Perhaps, too, that best of harlequins, Hopkins, was not also received with enthusiasm when he came in like a good fellow, and talked over the 'trips' and other mysterious matters with the pretty little columbine, and assured her it would be 'all right,' and took his punch without a bit of pride, and sang a comic song that convulsed the company. Oh no! of course not! Perhaps it wasn't 'all right' either when the crowded audience went into raptures with the beautiful little bright-haired dancer, and

cheered her to the echo, and the papers spoke of her as a wonder, and Bushby doubled her salary the second week. Oh no! certainly not!

I have only a word or so to add. 'Harlequin Bluebeard,' was an immense hit at Dullborough. Signor Trampoletti succeeded in delighting his audience, displaying a familiarity with

the English language most remarkable and satisfactory; the Stalactite Glen roused the people to enthusiasm; and when we last heard of Manager Moggs, it was on the occasion of his receiving a presentation of plate, in acknowledgment of his successful endeavours to resuscitate that long-neglected property, the 'Theatre Royal.

HENRY J. BYRON.

### TWELFTH-NIGHT CHARACTERS.

- ERNEST . . . [All eyes are on us!] Gentle consort, say  
What game the leading characters should play?
- MARGARET . . Since 'King' and 'Queen' have fallen to us by lot,  
We must play lovers [seem what we are—why not?]
- RIVAL . . . [Now, hang that fellow's impudence! He throws  
His eyes upon her till her fair cheek glows  
Red as the deep heart of a sun-touched rose!  
A wretch like that would cheat, coin, slay, or thieve—  
I wish I'd hidden the Twelfth King up my sleeve!]
- GRANBY . . . Come Chicks! 'tis time for bed. Pop rubs her eyes.  
'Early to rest'—Come, come!—'early to rise.'  
The breath of morn makes little limbs grow firm:  
'It is the early bird that gets the early worm.'
- BOY . . . . Ho! then the worm's up first?—Ho! ho! my! me!  
Why what a jolly fool the grub must be!
- GIRL . . . . Respect your elders, air! you're worse and worse:  
[But, I say, Gus!—let's run and hide from nurse.]
- CHILD . . . . Go 'way!—I's not asleep—I is awake!  
I don't want tarraters—I want a take.  
'Toopid tumundanums! I don't 'ike 'iddles.  
I do 'peak twooph—it's oo tells twewidwiddles!
- BACHELOR . . [Oh, had she had a less sarcastic tongue!]
- SPINSTER . . . [Oh, had he spoken when we both were young!]
- BACHELOR . . . [I've half a mind—By Jove! she looks this way.]
- SPINSTER . . . [He's not so old: his hair is scarcely grey.]
- ERNEST . . . Sweet! let me crown thee! [Do not glance aside;  
There frowns my rival, gazing on my bride.]  
This wreath shall crown thee Queen in regal bowers—  
[Oh, would it were the wreath of orange flowers!]
- MARGARET . . Give me your love for crown, my lord and king!  
And take this signet. [Keep, dear love! the ring.  
Heed not your rival: he wants common sense,  
Who woos with shillings and with pounds and pence.]
- RIVAL . . . . [A vain, conceited coxcomb!—I will draw  
Her father's eyes upon him. Knaves, by law  
Betray their comrades: why not better men?  
He was my friend:—he woos her; well, what then?  
Have I not done the very self-same thing?  
I'll turn king's evidence against the 'King'!  
Look to the throne! the 'King'!—the 'King'! I vow  
He twines the crown with mistletoe!—and now,



- Mark! with his knife pretends to trim the wreath,  
While the blade clips the severed lock beneath!
- PATERFAMILIAS. Bring me the hat!—We'll shuffle all anew!  
There's treason in the camp!—That girl shall rue—
- MATERFAMILIAS. Hold!—'tis against the rules. All the world's spite  
Cannot uncrown the 'King' of the Twelfth Night!
- ERNEST . . . Pardon, my gracious host! [Be not dismayed:  
I fear we've played the game of 'Love Betrayed.']  
My fault I own—yet own with no regret.  
I'd follow the example which you set.—  
Give me your daughter for my crown of life,  
And let me sink the 'Queen' in dearer name of 'Wife'!
- MARGARET . . Plead for us, gentle mother! If denied  
The youth I love, I'll own no king beside.
- PATERFAMILIAS. [What say you, mother?] Sure, young air, you're mad!  
I never will consent! [I wish I had!]
- MATERFAMILIAS. [Yield to them, father. How had you grieved, my dear,—  
Don't swear!—Had my poor father scorned your tear?]
- PATERFAMILIAS. [Well—but—O yes, of course—yet—hang the game!]  
The game we played, my dear, was not the same.  
Last year, when I was 'King'—
- MATERFAMILIAS. And I was 'Queen,'—  
Robed—you remember?—in your favourite green.  
'Twas not beneath the mistletoe we stood?
- PATERFAMILIAS. It was!
- PATERFAMILIAS. You dream!—I said—
- MATERFAMILIAS. You said 'The Game was Good'!
- PATERFAMILIAS. I never pressed your left-hand ring, nor slid  
My arm around your waist by stealth?—
- MATERFAMILIAS. You did!
- PATERFAMILIAS. O, very well! Since, then, my memory's gone,  
What right have I to the dictator's tone?  
My judgment lost, 'tis time my rule should cease:  
Solons in dotage are but Solan geese.  
Greybeards in Council may be very well;  
But here Love speaks for all.—[You're right, my Nell!]  
If I'm so false—so fickle and untrue  
To my young love, as to flirt with my old love too—  
'Tis clear I have no right—good heavens!—none,  
To curb my daughter's choice, who loves but one.  
How can I know that,—wanting common sense,—  
Her lover will repeat the same offence?  
Cooing in corners; heedless how time flies,  
Drinking the love-light in some dear old eyes?  
Or what know I that she may prove a shrew,  
And twit her lord in public? [As you do.]  
From his fair right of judgment interdict him:  
Laugh in his face, and flatly contradict him?  
Nay, since the man is mad, and needs a chain  
[Of flowers!] to wind about his heart and brain,  
Why, let him take the evil with the good;  
I wash my hands on't, be it understood!

There! take her, Ernest! Bind King Love slave-fast;  
 Take her, and let her 'Queen' it to the last!  
 RIVAL . . . [So! Since the judge will side with the defendant,  
 'Tis clear my star is not in the ascendant!]  
 MOTHERFAMILIAR. One word, my Margaret. Trust him not too far;  
 Oft with his hidden heart his words will jar;  
 And when he looks all anger in your face,  
 Be sure his heart leaps, smiling, in its place!  
 When o'er his fault he grieves with voice unsteady.  
 Rush to his arms: be sure the kiss is ready.  
 Attempt not to deceive him. Love is blind  
 Of face, because he sees you with his mind.  
 Love's very soul is stuck so full of eyes  
 You may count them by the thousand—like a fly's!  
 Your too apt lover learns to see like him,  
 And cries 'You're laughing!' though your eyes may swim:  
 Tells you you will, although you say you won't,  
 And vows you love him when you vow you don't!  
 And, mind! if, after twenty years, he dare  
 To say you count him King of Men and swear  
 No soul on earth's so noble, wise as he,  
 Believe not what he says:—my dear, trust me:  
 You could not swear it, for the thing is false!  
 You spoke it, but when giddy with the waltz.  
 There is but one man fit to hold the sway  
 O'er woman's heart: [Sir! take your arm away!  
 What is the use of preaching like the schools,  
 If children see we are but two old fools?]  
 But one that's richest in his lack of gold;  
 Fit to o'er-rule the whole wide world, and hold  
 The reins of empire dropped from our weak hands;  
 There is but one, I say—and here he stands!  
 And though, I own, he sometimes snubs, [No?—Rather!]  
 Yet still I say it—that one is your father!

ELEANORA L. HERVEY.



Per

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Illustration of a woman in a large, ornate dress, standing in a room. The dress has a high collar and long sleeves. The background is dark and indistinct.

There! take her, Ernest! Bind King Love slave to  
Take her, and let her 'Queen' it to the last!

RIVAL . . . [So! Since the judge will side with the defendant,  
The clear my star is not in the ascendant!]

MATHEMATICAL. One word, my Margaret. Trust him not too far;  
Oft with his hidden heart his words will jar;  
And when he looks all anger in your face,  
Be sure his heart leaps, smiling, in its place!  
When o'er his fault he grieves with voice unsteady,  
Rush to his arms; he sure the kiss is ready.  
Attempt not to deceive him—Love is blind  
Of face, because he sees you with his mind.  
Love's eyes and 'tis stuck so full of eyes  
You may count them by the thousand—like a fly.  
You too apt lover learns to see like him,  
And cries 'You're laughing!' though your eyes may swim;  
Tells you you will, although you say you won't;  
And vows you love him when you vow you don't!  
And, mind! if, after twenty years, he dare  
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There is but one, I say—and here he stands!  
And though, I own, he sometimes snubs, [No?—snubs?]—  
Yet still I say it—that one is your father!

HELENORA L. HEWLEY.



Per

V.  
C.  
Q.  
P.  
C.  
S.  
T.



BARBER. Sweet! let me crown thee! (Do not glance aside;  
 These Downs my eyes, gazing on my bride,  
 This wreath shall crown thee Queen in these bowers—  
 Oh, would it were the wreath of orange flowers.)

Drawn by Martin Stone.

MARGARET. Give me your love for crown, my lord and king!  
 And take this signet. (Keep, dear love! the ring.  
 Hadst not your rival, he would scorn such love—  
 Who wooed with shillings and with pence and pence.)

See "Twelfth-night Characters."